

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION-PRIVACY ACTS SECTION

SUBJECT: VVAW

FILE NO: HQ 100-448092-4107 *EBF*

SECTION: \_\_\_\_\_

PAGES REVIEWED: 58

PAGES RELEASED: 58

REFERRALS: \_\_\_\_\_

EXEMPTIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Introduction

We are writing this paper because we see the importance of as much input as possible from the chapters to the resolution of the serious ideological struggle going on within VVAW-WSO. The Buffalo chapter appreciates the seriousness of this struggle and the effect it will have on our day-to-day work, on our organization, and on the movement to smash imperialism in the United States. We see that it is the chapters of the organization, whose practice determines its effectiveness in serving the needs of a segment of the population, that must determine the direction of this struggle and its resolution.

We criticize ourselves for presenting this paper to the rest of the organization on such short notice before the December NSCM.. We originally dealt with the task of writing this paper in a mechanical way which did not encourage participation and support from the entire membership of the chapter. We did not make this task a priority over our day-to-day ongoing work until very recently. Since we have committed ourselves in a disciplined way to the accomplishment of writing this paper, we have considered it necessary to take the time to thoroughly investigate and research the questions facing us. We see that it is very important that our position be based on an objective analysis of our history and the material conditions we are living in. We see that we must assess the strengths and weaknesses of the anti-imperialist movement and its enemies in coming to a conclusion about the direction of VVAW-WSO. In attempting to understand these conditions we have looked to the dialectical development of our chapter's theory and practice and the history of VVAW-WSO as a national organization. We have attempted to investigate the oppression of veterans and the history of their resistance as well as gain an understanding through research of the concept of the United Front Against Imperialism and its use as a strategy in people's movements around the world.

We have attempted to set up a means of writing this paper that would enable many people to participate in a collective manner. We see that it is very important to represent our chapter in this statement of our political position. In order to do this, we set up an ad hoc committee within the chapter composed of twelve people who took on different areas of responsibility for research and investigation of the questions addressed in the paper. We then set up an internal chapter forum for the presentation and discussion of the political content of the paper so we could strive for unity around it among the membership of the entire chapter.

We recognize the importance of objectivity in approaching the writing of this paper, and the necessity to be honest and principled if we are going to correctly put politics in command. We see that it cannot serve the interests of our political development to be liberal, opportunist, or unprincipled as we attempt to develop unity around a political understanding and direction that will move this organization and the anti-imperialist movement forward.

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The roots of this struggle are within the history of this organization. Our struggles in the past around sexism, vet's chauvinism, anti-communism, the importance of political education, to a lesser extent racism, and our entire development into an anti-imperialist organization have all been part of the process of development toward a struggle of this nature. However, the struggle has been removed from an analysis of our concrete conditions, our historical development, and our practice and has been manipulated by forces inside and outside of VVAW-WSO. The struggle has not been carried out in the interests of the political development of the organization. This is a result of the view that this struggle will be "won" or "lost" by one side or the other. This is shown by the lack of investigation and research that has taken place, the definition of this struggle as one of two or three lines which misrepresents the level of development of the struggle, and the position baiting that has taken place. The line of the National Office has been pushed in Winter Soldier, at national conferences (i.e. NCUUA and GI Conference) as representative of a line that has been struggled around and achieved political unity and does represent the organization as a whole. This, in fact, is not reality. This has effectively forced opposition to that line out of the organization and misrepresented the organization to other forces in the anti-imperialist movement that we should be striving to unite with in an honest way. The lack of respect for the membership and their role in the resolution of this struggle has been reflected in the arrogant and condescending tone in which it has been addressed to them. This is a commandist tendency, where unqualified "correct" ideas are being put forward in a way which discourages principled political struggle. This can be seen in how the NO dealt with criticisms in their clarification paper. They lay blame to the membership's "misinterpretation" and "confusion" as the basis for the criticisms and clearly did not see the need to re-examine and reinvestigate their own position before writing their "clarification". While the NO admits certain "weaknesses" in their position, they fail to clearly state their concepts and deal with the criticisms as conscious political disagreements. While the concept of constituency organizing is still central to their political position, the term is discarded. The concept of United Front is also central to their position, but the NO denies the necessity to educate the masses in the organization to further their understanding of the concept. This is pure Opportunism!

There have been other tendencies toward manipulating this struggle in a way that is not in the interest of political development. A meeting to consolidate the "minority line" before the December NSCM has been proposed. It is not clear to us who this meeting was supposed to include, but it also represents the tendency to view this struggle as a battle to be "won" or "lost". The struggle will not develop in a principled way, with politics in command, as long as mechanical solutions are relied upon.

There have been forces outside the organization which have served to manipulate the struggle also. The Revolutionary Union has recently taken a great interest in the "upsurging spontaneous veterans' movement" and in VVAW-WSO as the "leaders" of this movement. VVAW-WSO has consistently been portrayed in this way in publications of the RU, assuming a level of unity around such a program that does not objectively exist in VVAW-WSO. Their per-

imperialism. It is important that veterans realize that their needs do not have to be met at the expense of those of other groups; that a socialist re-ordering of American society will allow everyone's needs to be satisfied. For this reason we must make a distinction between those benefits necessary for a veteran to readjust to society and those benefits given out to make veterans a privileged or special interest group. If we fail to make this distinction in our political work, we will be, regardless of our intent, strengthening the divisive tendency of veterans' chauvinism.

#### VETERANS' OPPRESSION IN AREAS OF READJUSTMENT

Veterans have legitimate readjustment needs. These needs are not being adequately met, and where there is any attempt to meet them, these attempts are put forward in the guise of privileges, rather than as readjustment needs. The fight for readjustment needs is important, and concrete investigation must be done if we are to lead this fight.

Medical Needs: The VA hospital system is the largest in the country. It should be providing adequate care for the thousands of Vietnam-era veterans with medical problems. But it doesn't. The VA system is set up to meet both the readjustment needs of vets and to perpetuate a privileged vets status. Vets with military-related injuries are treated, plus veterans with non-military-related injuries who cannot afford treatment elsewhere. The treatment of service-connected injuries is a valid readjustment need. But, the admission of vets with non-service-connected injuries is an attempt to reinforce vets privileges. There is no reason for a person to get free medical treatment simply because he or she is a vet. Everyone is entitled to free and decent medical care. All struggles for medical care should stress that medical care is a right for all, not a privilege for some.

The practice of the VA medical system is to emphasize the privilege aspect at the expense of the readjustment aspect. VA hospitals are "primarily oriented toward institutionalized treatment of the chronic diseases of the aged" (chapter 4, p. 73 of Nader's Report on Vietnam era veterans The Discarded Army)

The VA is doing little to meet the needs of veterans with war injuries, and almost nothing to deal with Vietnam era veterans' drug and psychological problems. That the VA is not meeting these readjustment needs is reflected by the reluctance of young vets to enter VA hospitals in the first place and by their high rate of discharges from VA hospitals against the advice of the medical staff.

Education: The purpose of a veterans' education bill should be to let a veteran have an opportunity to go to school and learn a skill. The GI Bill for WWII veterans allowed vets to do this by providing for full tuition payments plus living expenses. The present GI Bill doesn't allow vets the same opportunity because it pays a small monthly sum that doesn't even cover living expenses, much less tuition. Thus, vets must have some other source of income if they are to go to school. The effect of these low educational benefits is to deny educational opportunities to large numbers of vets. The VA likes to brag about how the percentage of veterans

using the GI Bill is now the highest ever. What they don't brag about is the reality that many vets who sign up once for the bill can't afford to stay in school and must drop out before their education is completed.

Employment: This is the problem facing the largest number of vets. It is also the one that is most tied in with veterans' oppression as part of the working class. And it also interweaves with all the other forms of oppression that veterans face that are specifically connected to the status of being a veteran, such as bad discharges, education, etc. The basic cause of veterans' special oppression in the employment area is that vets have lost time in the job market. This loss has not been made up to veterans in any other way, except for the small numbers of vets who have been able to apply the skills they learned in the military to civilian life. The purpose of readjustment benefits should be to bring vets up to the level of their peers who have not lost time in the military. The biggest problem is that vets' peers are also in a bad situation as far as employment is concerned. Figuring out strategies that just bring vets back to the level of the rest of the working class, without putting vets ahead of other people is a very difficult task.

Bad Discharges: This is one of the clearest areas of veterans' oppression. A bad discharge stems directly from military service. It affects vets and no one else. It is one of the most destructive areas of oppression because it can affect a vet's medical, educational and employment opportunities. The arbitrary and racist manner in which discharges are given is something we all know of. (Although many vets and the public at large have only a vague awareness of the true nature of the discharge system.) Bad discharges are very important to organize around because they bring up the very important points: one, the concept of "readjustment" and the difficulty that many vets have in reintegrating themselves into society, and two, the true nature of the war and the rebellion and repression that it caused in the military.

#### VVAW/WFO's WORK IN READJUSTMENT

Our organization has, in the past, recognized the need to help veterans readjust, and has struggled against the presentation of veterans as a privileged group. Our struggle against veterans' chauvinism has ranged from the throwing away of medals at the ritual steps to the recent struggle against A.V.M. This struggle against vet chauvinism has been a difficult one, and it has not been without its setbacks.

Similarly, our struggles for the readjustment needs of veterans have also been both successes and failures. We have never been able to form a solid national program to deal with PVS. Some local chapters, such as the N.Y. City chapter, have had successful PVS rap groups. Other chapters, Buffalo among them, have had lots of problems with their PVS groups.

We have not had much success in dealing with veterans' employment problems. Some vets have gotten jobs through EBT-type programs, but these jobs only help a small number of vets, they are often "scab" jobs, and they have accepted some people, as these jobs are assigned to do.

the readjustment area where we have done the most work is DUP. Our success here has also been mixed. In San Francisco, and some other areas, chapters have been swamped with work, and yet have not had a corresponding increase in membership or activity among vets with bad discharges. This is in spite of the fact that our political line to DUP has always been an anti-imperialist one. At DUP projects have been run mainly as service projects, reinforcing vet chauvinism by giving vets the image that we are similar to traditional veteran groups that help vets get "bennies". In some ways, the "War on the VA" fits the same pattern. The political line is nominally anti-imperialist, but the actual practice of the "war" will again put us in the position of attempting to deliver the "bennies" to the vets - "bennies" we won't be able to deliver.

### WHAT IS VETERANS' CHAUVINISM

Chauvinism is the defense of a privileged position or status in society. Unchallenged, it is a tendency that sets back revolutionary growth. The material basis of chauvinism is privilege - political, economic and cultural - so deeply entrenched in the superstructure of society that its effects are rarely realized or articulated. For instance, the ideology of sexism - male supremacy - is the conscious manifestation of male chauvinism; like the tip of an iceberg, it is the visible portion of a massive accumulation of individual, social and historical conditioning. It is entirely possible to consciously repudiate a bourgeois ideology such as sexism and still not deal with its chauvinistic foundation. An example is to say that imperialism is the root cause of sexism. This both ignores the historical dimension of women's struggles and seriously underestimates the need for a truly revolutionary transformation of society.

Chauvinism is not an invention of the Imperialists who control this society. In most cases, it pre-dates the Capitalist epoch. It does, however, provide a most effective means for the ruling class to divide the working class and its closest allies along lines of privilege. This is done through the manipulation of certain groups by making them economically and socially dependent on existing political relationships. Prior to the advent of advanced Capitalism, such privilege was highly valued in society. Now, just as there is no justification for the existence of class exploitation or any form of oppression, there is no justifiable rationale for privilege or chauvinism.

Historically, veterans have been a group that the ruling class has sought to keep in a privileged position. Among the means used to do this are: the official promotion of exclusively veterans groups; the granting of legitimate readjustment demands in such a way and context so as to perpetuate the sense of privilege; and the distortion and glorification of the military experience. By these means, an image of veterans as being more patriotic and self-sacrificing than others, as well as more deserving, is maintained.

This process is often initiated by veterans themselves. In addition to the need to join together to fight against the forms of physical and mental oppression particular to veterans, there is a very natural desire to preserve the friendships and camaraderie that stem from the service. By both direct political manipulation and by



promoting these "leaders" of the vets' movement whose class outlook most closely matches their own, the ruling class is able to channel these very real needs into privilege. An example of the former is the EEA program which gave Vietnam Era veterans job preference in governmental jobs (but only under conditions that effectively made them second class workers and scabs). Of the latter, the way bourgeois liberal politicians tried to advance John Kerry as the spokesman for VVAW in 1971. The two can combine. The formation and growth of the American Legion is illustrative of how representatives of the ruling class—all officers of World War I—deliberately appealed to veterans' chauvinism in an effort to keep the majority of veterans from acting in their own class interests.

The Veterans Administration, incorrectly labeled the "point of oppression" of Vietnam Era vets by some in VVAW/WSO, is itself an example of the government encouraging veterans' chauvinism by the use of privileges. Stung by the militance of the 1932 Bonus March and the Depression, the ruling class moved during World War II to defuse any potentially revolutionary situation involving returned veterans. The primary rationale for the VA was that it would give returned veterans—and only vets—a chance to become "productive" citizens in the postwar years and thus give them a stake in preserving the political status quo. Eleanor Roosevelt stated in 1942 that returning veterans might become "a dangerous pressure group in our midst" and that the government needed to "adjust our economic system so that the opportunity is open to them on their return, or we may reap the whirlwind." By creating the VA and giving it control over almost all veterans' programs and in addition by linking it with the reactionary veterans' "service" organizations (the only ones chartered by Congress) and the military, the government has tried to structure the means of doling out veterans' privilege to its own advantage.

Any programs or tactics aimed at organizing veterans around their very real readjustment needs must take privilege and chauvinism into account. Otherwise, they may well have the objective effect of strengthening these tendencies. After World War II, the demands of returning GI's for jobs caused about 3,000,000 women workers to be laid off, numerous daycare centers to close, and a propaganda campaign aimed at convincing the women workers their place was in the home. Because of the strong appeal of chauvinism, few veterans or women workers questioned or challenged this move. If that many workers were thrown out of work under any other circumstances, militant protests would almost surely result.

The same holds true today. Penthouse magazine has been running a series of well-documented and angry articles about the shabby reception and treatment of the Vietnam Era veteran. In many ways, their approach to this, and their specific proposals concerning the VA, sound somewhat like ours. Yet, this series is most likely a creation of the government; a deliberate appeal to chauvinism in order to keep Vietnam Era vets from forging alliances with other oppressed groups. The series coordinator is Carl McCarden, identified in the articles as a Vietnam vet and former head of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs in New York City. What the articles don't say is that McCarden is also a Black career Major, currently on leave of absence from his last post as an economics instructor at West Point. In Vietnam, he was an officer in the Special Forces and, at one point, a special advisor to the commander of the Special Forces.



s current function with the Penthouse series is almost certainly an extension of his counterurgency duties in Indochina. The appeal of veterans' chauvinism, enforced here by an appeal to male chauvinism, extends even to militant protests directed at the VA.

or is McCarden's case unique. The lesson is clear. Any agitational work this organization does, without moving directly to expose and wash privilege and chauvinism, runs the risk of objectively serving the same ends that lackeys such as McCarden serve.

## IS THERE A SPONTANEOUS MOVEMENT OF VETERANS

This section will try to do a short sum-up of what our investigation into the history of veterans' movements and our analysis of this history and present conditions tell us about the existence and possibility of a spontaneous veterans movement today. Our reading of history has revealed that spontaneous vets movements have arisen after every major war. Within approximately five years following the end of the particular war, the vets movements have split into two tendencies. One tendency is for veterans to become involved in other struggles as their alienation from the war lessened and as their alienation from the war lessened and as other forms of oppression became primary in their lives. Examples of this are the role of vets in settling the west and in the labor movements after the two world wars. The other tendency is for veterans to be coopted into veteran privilege groups like the American Legion who promote veterans as a special interest group.

I see no divergence from the pattern discussed above in veterans' struggles today. We think that the last few years have seen many significant expressions of spontaneous veteran activity. The founding of this organization was largely spontaneous and one of the major factors, if not the main factor, for the success of Dewey Canyon III was its spontaneous nature. However, spontaneous actions by veterans are decreasing, not increasing. Dialectics teaches us that many small, quantitative changes eventually become so numerous that they precipitate a qualitative change. History teaches us that veterans movements of the past have been composed of many small upsurges, but that these upsurges have never caused a qualitative change in the character of veterans activities into something that could be called revolutionary veterans' movement. Vets today have played significant roles in struggles such as Lordstown and in the New York City Post Offices. We do not think that the role of vets in these struggles is any different from the previous struggles of vets against their economic exploitation rather than their veterans oppression. To appeal to people involved in these struggles on the basis of their veterans status is in fact a divisive approach. To fabricate a veterans movement out of a few quantitative-type activities would be reformist and could cause us to tail behind the masses, because when workers who happen to be vets really begin to move, we will be left behind if we are still trying to appeal to them as veterans.

As we have discussed previously, the Indochina vet is different in many ways from previous vets. These differences may result in a qualitatively new movement among veterans. If this is so, our present analysis may be incorrect. But, our best efforts to date lead us to conclude that there is no spontaneous movement of veterans in this country at this time.

## UNITED FRONT

The purpose of this section of our paper is to analyze the relationship between a United Front Against Imperialism (UFAI) and the struggle presently being waged in our organization. Although we will examine various aspects of United Fronts, we are primarily concerned with the tactical form or structure of UFAI. Owing to this fact the investigation being conducted here is purposely limited and by no means should be considered an exhaustive or complete study.

In order to realize this purpose, we will attempt to answer what we think are the basic questions concerning United Fronts in general and specifically the developing UFAI in this country. We will structure this paper, as closely as possible, in accordance with the order of the questions listed below. These questions are:

1. What is a United Front?
2. What is a coalition?
3. What is a United Front Against Imperialism (UFAI)?
4. What is the purpose of a UFAI?
5. Does a UFAI exist today?
6. How is a UFAI formed?
7. Can a UFAI exist without a party?
8. What is the role of the party in UFAI?
9. What is the difference between the work of a mass anti-imperialist organization, a cadre organization and a communist organization?
10. What is the role of communists in a mass anti-imperialist organization?
11. Are we being "U.S. exceptionalists" by putting forward the "minority" position?
12. Is constituency organizing the correct tactic of UFAI in the U.S. today?
13. Does VVAW/WSO hurt the formation of the UFAI by taking the so-called "minority" position?
14. Was the July 1-4 Washington D.C. demo a United Front action?

(Numbers 5-8 are incorporated into the paper and are not listed as such formally).

### 1. What is a United Front?

A United Front is an alliance; the unity of all classes and strata who are in direct or have sharp contradictions with monopoly capitalism. It must be led by the proletariat and its advanced contingent, a genuine communist party.

### 2. What is a coalition?

A coalition is a temporary alliance of political organizations for a specific purpose.

### 3. What is a United Front Against Imperialism?

In the plan for socialist revolution, the UFAI is the uniting of all forces (classes and strata) who are in direct or have sharp contradictions with monopoly capitalism. It is an alliance which can and has developed on a variety of levels and scales. This question of a variety of levels and scales will be dealt with in some detail as the paper progresses. Such alliances are constructed on the mutual self interests of those classes and strata, including

the party, mass organizations, groups and individuals involved in the particular struggle around which the United Front is formed.

#### 4. What is the purpose of the UFAI?

The United Front strategy for proletarian revolution means that the UF is the over-all plan for bringing about the destruction of the rule of monopoly capitalism in the U.S. and the establishment of the political rule of the working class; the dictatorship of the proletariat. In a word, the UF strategy is the plan for proletarian revolution in the U.S.

There are three basic ingredients necessary for proletarian revolution through the strategy of the UF. They are: a true communist party, the mass movement of all who can be united to defeat U.S. imperialism and armed struggle to smash the bourgeoisie.

The first ingredient is the "advanced detachment" of the proletariat, the "general staff" or the "leading organization", in short, the party. The objective conditions at this time make building a UFAI very difficult due to the lack of a party to lead it. This is not to say that because there is no party that the mass movement will stagnate and die. The party itself cannot take the place of the mass movement nor can the mass movement spontaneously bring forth the party. The two will develop hand in hand.

In the past, both nationally and internationally UFs have arisen without the direction of a proletarian party based on the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. The movement from which many of us developed, the anti-war movement, provides an excellent example of an unconscious formation of a UF. Numerous organizations and groups, with varying class differences with monopoly capitalism, arose and were able, with varying degrees of success, to unite for a common goal—the end of US involvement in Indochina. Many victories can be pointed to as a result. The material assistance rendered to the Vietnamese and their leadership, the awakening of significant sectors of the American people, particularly the students, youth and minorities, to the experience of politics in America. And, finally, the instilling in the masses of deep and genuine feelings against foreign military involvement.

The shortcomings of the anti-war movement, however, are today painfully evident. For, having failed to develop under the guidance of the working class, its political leadership and that leadership's political ideology, much of the movement came to be dominated by the "left" wing of the bourgeoisie, i.e., the Kennedys, McGovern, and others. Without conscious proletarian leadership the masses remained in large numbers undeveloped to the real nature of the war and how it is the very nature of capitalism to make war, the ultimate form of oppression. This lack of proletarian leadership led to the co-optation of the movement, its strangulation, decline and near total collapse.

Albania provides an example of masses of people without a party banding together in common alliance against the invasion of the Nazis. This situation, however, proved to be very different than the one just alluded to. The Albanian Party of Labor was able to unify within two years after the onslaught, provide the United Front with direction and lead it to victory over both the fascists and eventually over their own bourgeoisie.

The second ingredient of proletarian revolution in order to implement this strategy for revolution is that there must be mass movements which actively oppose imperialism. Stalin says that, "Political strategy, like tactics, is concerned with the working class movement". But the working class movement itself consists of two elements: 1) the objective, or spontaneous element and, 2) the subjective or conscious element". In other words, the concrete repressive conditions that exist are what cause any spontaneous movement in any given situation, irrespective of the will of the masses or the desire of any particular organizational leadership. This means that even though it is the duty of communists and/or any other people in leadership positions to propagandize and educate around certain injustices, they should not and must not attempt to create a spontaneous up-rising of the masses. This leadership should respond to the needs of the people, not encourage the people to respond to what they think their needs are. It is up to communists to do the education necessary to help the masses become aware of their needs, but they should not push the masses towards change through action until there is conscious awareness of their needs and the masses are determined to carry the struggle forward.

The subjective or conscious side of the movement, again according to Stalin, "consists of the reflection in the minds of the workers of the movement; it is the conscious and deliberate movement of the proletariat towards a definite aim". Before this can take place, assuming there is a real spontaneous movement occurring, there must be, as Dimitroff stated, "Unity of Action". This, as Snake pointed out, is a "pre-requisite for the establishment of a united front, not the united front itself". Does this mean we are incapable of building toward the formation of a United Front? On the contrary. But we must correctly assess the situation as it really exists. Obviously, much scientific investigation as well as mass practice must be our goals for the future. We cannot assume there exists, nor can we create a mass upsurge, of any specific grouping (constituency) simply because we would like to see that be. We will elaborate on whether or not we see a mass upsurge of veterans later in the paper. An accurate historical and material analysis must always be our guide in understanding what direction our practice will take us. We must move forward, not toward sectarianism, narrowness and opportunism. At this point in time, we see the UFAI developing in more or less loose organizational forms as long as there is no party to lead it. This places more responsibility on the mass organizations; a responsibility that is ultimately that of the party.

The third need of the proletariat is that of armed struggle. It seems evident that when the masses of people in this country rise up in anger against the repressive nature of capitalism, that these capitalists are not simply going to give in and allow the people to take over. Without exception, every socialist country in the world has had to engage in armed struggle to finally defeat capitalism. We cannot expect the situation in this country to be any different. Obviously, the time is not yet ripe, but we should clearly understand the necessity of such action and the need for the proletariat to grasp their historic role.

### 5. How is a United Front Against Imperialism formed?

First, it should be pointed out that there are two-stage and one-stage revolutions, depending on "the level of productive forces, the essential determining element in the content and form of class struggle". ("The Weapon of Theory", Amilcar Cabral, speech given at the Tricontinental, 1966). This means that under imperialism, those which function primarily as exploiters, the developed nations, will see one-stage revolutions, and those who are primarily exploited, the underdeveloped nations, in the main Third World nations under colonial or neo-colonial domination, will see two stages: the first being liberation, the second being the socialist revolution.

The United Front Against Imperialism and Foreign Aggression is the strategy for revolution in colonial and third world countries. A two-stage revolution must occur. This first stage of the revolution can and does include the national bourgeoisie and the national labor aristocracy. But the main force is the proletariat and peasantry. The first stage consists of the ouster of the foreign aggressor, that being imperialism, and any remnants of feudalism that remains, plus the implementation of a new democratic state.

A classic example of a UFAI is found in China from 1936-1945, where the Chinese Communists Party, under the leadership of Mao Tse-Tung, was able to unite the working class, peasantry, national bourgeoisie and even certain elements of the comprador class to oppose Japanese aggression. In the first stage, the Chinese communists were able to unite with Chiang Kai-Shek to throw out Japanese imperialism. In order to move into the second stage, these same comprador bourgeois forces and the U.S. government allies had to be overthrown in order to establish socialism.

In this country there can be only a one stage revolution to achieve socialism. The United Front, which is the strategy for this one stage revolution, must exclude all elements who would compromise with the capitalists (bourgeoisie). This includes the labor aristocracy, the Black bourgeoisie and the hard core lumpen. This UF is an alliance of classes and strata to oppose the monopoly capitalist class. In the U.S. this means concretely uniting all those who can be united to oppose imperialism which is the rule of monopoly capitalism. Today we live in an epoch of wars of national liberation, causing Mao to note in his statement of May 20 that "A new upsurge in the struggle against U.S. imperialism is now emerging in the world. Revolution is the main trend in the world today." Here in the heart of imperialism, the vast majority of people can be united in opposition to the same system which oppresses people on five continents. This is possible because the fundamental contradiction is also the principle one; that being between the working class and the monopoly capitalist class. In order for the working class and oppressed nations to achieve political power, however, it must win and maintain the support of all those oppressed by imperialism. This includes as primary allies the poor farmers, the masses of wage slaves, blacks (we do not have unity around whether or not there is an oppressed black nation), oppressed national minorities, masses of working class youth and women, the reserve army of the unemployed; and as secondary allies, small businessmen, the urban middle class and professionals and the intelligentsia. However, before this task can

be achieved scientific analysis of the concrete conditions in this country must be undertaken, understanding both the unique conditions in this country and that theory is our guide to action.

6. What is the role of the Party in United Front Against Imperialism?

"Without the Communist Party it will be impossible to consolidate our victories, minimize our losses and overcome setbacks, to sustain activity through all the periods of ebb in the struggle, to take full advantage of weaknesses and contradictions in the enemy camp and to wage a thorough fight for the United Front and, through the United Front, for the dictatorship of the proletariat." Pg. 55, The Red Papers. 1, 2. & 3.

And from a proposal concerning the general line of the International Communist movement, the author of the central committee of the Communist Party of China in reply to the letter of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. March 30, 1963.

"...the proletarian party must under the present circumstances actively lead the working class and the working people in struggles to oppose monopoly capital, to defend democratic rights, to oppose the menace of fascism, to improve living conditions, to oppose imperialist arms expansion and war preparations, to defend world peace and actively support revolutionary struggles of oppressed nations..."

"...the proletarian parties in imperialist or capitalist countries must maintain their own ideological, political and organizational independence in leading revolutionary struggles. At the same time they must unite all the forces that can be united and build a broad united front against monopoly capital and against the imperialist politics of aggression and war

"While actively leading immediate struggles, Communists in the capitalist countries should link them with the struggle for long range and general interests, educate the masses in a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary spirit, ceaselessly raise their political consciousness and undertake the historical task of proletarian revolution."

7. What is the difference between the work of mass anti-imperialist organizations, cadre organizations, and communist organizations?

The work that mass anti-imperialist organizations do is to actively oppose imperialist oppression and to raise the level of consciousness of its membership and base from the recognition of individual oppression to the understanding of other people's forms of oppression, the need for a UFAI to oppose imperialist oppression and to oppose anti-communist tendencies.

Cadre is the nucleus around which an expanded organization can be built. The work of a cadre organization that is anti-imperialist and not communist is the same as that of a mass organization except that the two organizations differ in structure, and discipline and the avenues open to membership in the decision-making process that determines the political ideas and practice of the organization.

The primary work of Communist organizations, now and at any time a Communist Party does not exist, is to build a Communist Party.



"Without question, communists must be involved in mass work. We must never strive to narrow down mass actions. The mass movement will not wait for us. But in engaging in mass work, in fighting to win over the advanced elements to Marxism-Leninism and fighting for the leadership of the proletariat, we must at all times remember that the wider the movement, the more necessary the building of the party, for without the party who is going to lead the mass movement-the bourgeoisie!"  
p. 37, Black Liberation Struggle, the Black Workers Congress and Proletarian Revolution, 1974.

8. What is the role of Communists in a mass organization?

Again, to quote Mao, "Our cultural workers must serve the people with great enthusiasm and devotion, and they must link themselves with the masses, not divorce themselves from the masses. In order to do so they must get in accordance with the needs and wishes of the masses. All work done for the masses must start from their needs and not from the desire of any individual, however well-intentioned. It often happens that objectively the masses need a certain change, but subjectively, they are not yet conscious of the need, not yet willing or determined to make the change. We should wait patiently. We should not make the change until, through our work, most of the masses have become conscious of the need and are willing and determined to carry it out. Otherwise, we shall isolate ourselves from the masses. Unless they are conscious and willing, any kind of work that requires their participation will turn out to be a mere formality and fail... There are two principles here: one is the actual needs of the masses rather than what we fancy they need; the other is the wishes of the masses, who must make up their own minds instead of our making up their minds for them."

9. Are we being "U.S. exceptionalist" by putting forth the so-called "minority" position?

"U.S. exceptionalism" is a term for the idealist notion that the concrete material conditions that exist in the U.S. are different than those of Albania, China, the Soviet Union and so on and therefore the theories of Marx and Lenin no longer apply. We see that the concrete conditions that exist in this country are different from concrete conditions of the past, but we firmly support Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-Tung thought and the application of these theories for making revolution in the U.S.

In the 1940's, when the task of the working class was to participate in the world-wide struggle against fascism and to maintain its independence from the bourgeoisie to struggle against that bourgeoisie.

Earl Browder helped develop full-scale revisionist capitulationist line that eventually resulted in the CP's dissolution in 1944. Browder's line revived "American exceptionalism" and denied the application of the laws of Marxism-Leninism to American conditions. Thus, he betrayed the proletariat. Today there are attempts to revive this idealist line. Although we certainly believe that the concrete conditions in this country at this time are different, "new leftism" and neo-revisionism, which have dominated the mass movements of the 60's must be refuted.

10. Is organizing around the needs of specific groups of people the correct tactic of the UFAI in the U.S. today?

The question of "special groups" organizing is not a strategic question, but rather one of tactics. I.E., Does it move the struggle as a whole forward to organize around the needs of specific groups of people?

We think that in cases where there is a real upsurge of masses of people within any given specific group of people, then the answer is yes.



Decisions reached around such tactical questions must be as a result of scientific analysis based on the concrete conditions that exist, i.e., reality. This decision must not be arrived at simply on the evidence of "this or that experience" or the "success" of "this or that action", i.e., wars on the VA. Only by such scientific analysis can the idealistic errors of empiricism, pragmatism and subjectivity be avoided.

11. Was the July 1-4 D.C. Demonstration a United Front?

First, we must examine the various groups represented and determine if the D.C. demonstration was.

1. A uniting of all forces (classes and strata) who are in direct or sharp contradiction with monopoly capitalism and,

2. Was the alliance constructed for the mutual self-interests of those classes and strata?

Who was represented at the demonstration? Members of VVAW/WSO, the Revolutionary Union and the Student Brigade, Indochina Solidarity Committee and traces of other leftist groups. This is obviously not representative of all classes and strata. There were few, if any, Blacks and other minorities, wage slaves, professionals and trade unionists, the core of the mass movement. We would say that the first criteria was definitely not realized.

Would we say that the demands: Decent Benefits for All Vets, Universal, Unconditional Amnesty, Single Type Discharge, End All Aid to Thieu and Lon Nol, Implement the Agreements, and Kick Nixon Out were in the mutual self-interests of those represented. The answer, insofar as we see these demands as class issues, is yes.

We think the D.C. Demo properly fits into the category of a coalition - a temporary alliance of political organizations for a specific purpose.

The NO analysis of the DC demo leads us to the conclusion that the NO not only incorrectly analyzed that demo, but that they have a rather hazy interpretation of United Fronts in general.

12. Does VVAW/WSO hurt the formation of the UFAI by taking the so-called "minority position"?

Today, the decline of U.S. imperialism is accelerating. Its contention with Soviet social imperialism is intensifying, and it is in a deepening economic crisis. The monopoly capitalists are shifting the burden of the crises onto the backs of the working class at home and the oppressed nations abroad, attempting to develop fascism and preparing for imperialist war against the oppressed nations. The task facing the working class movement is to fight against the shifting of the economic crises onto its back, to fight against imperialism and prepare for revolution. The establishment of a communist party is of vital importance here to give direction not only to VVAW/WSO, but to the mass movement in general.

The United Front Against Imperialism is the strategy that must be implemented in order to achieve revolution. We do not propose that we are in a position to unequivocally analyze the correct tactics to be implemented within this basic strategy of a UF. This is the duty of the Party. What we do propose is a method, that being dialectical, through which we may better understand our organizational development through a world view as opposed to a "Veterans' View", thus making us more capable of clearly understanding the oppression of all people as an anti-imperialist organization.

George Dimitroff, addressing the Seventh World Congress in 1935, spoke of the impending nature of fascism at that point in time and laid an applicable foundation for the building of a United Front Against Fascism. We believe that this was a correct analysis of tactics at that time.

A UFAP, as typified by Dimitroff, is a strategic response to the concrete conditions of the onslaught of fascism. The tactical form of the organs making up the U.F. were also due to the concrete conditions of the time. These tactical forms were developed by a dialectical process. We must utilize this same method as we analyze the present situation. It is pure pragmatism to copy something simply because it worked in the past.

The Great Depression provided revolutionaries with the opportunity to propagandize and politicize for social struggle against capitalism. Instead, the capitalists were able to overcome the antagonisms of the people with massive social reform programs. One of those was the establishment of the VA after WWII. Ever since, with the exception of war years, capitalism has coopted more and more of the masses every time it grants fringe benefits to a certain rebellious group. In the absence of a unifying revolutionary organization, the party, it is the history of the last quarter century that special interests groups have concentrated on winning concessions for themselves.

While reforms are not necessarily counter-revolutionary, it depends upon whether we allow ourselves to manipulate people with these programs by not pointing out constantly the very nature of reform as a method of co-optation. For instance, the establishment of the miners for democracy under the direction of Arnold Miller was a step forward for miners, specifically and workers in general. However, Miller must be seen as a vaselating liberal at best. His programs cannot be viewed as an end, but rather only a step toward the eventual ownership of the means of production. Independent organizers must not allow their roles to be liquidated. Miller was only the first step in the total democratization of unions as a stage toward the building for revolution. There was a real spontaneous uprising of miners, thus bringing about the demise of Tony Boyle and the improvement of basic conditions for miners in general.

Is there then a spontaneous uprising of veterans in this country? This is obviously an area where much investigation needs to be done. However, some conclusions can be drawn at this time. We can see historically that spontaneous uprisings of veterans occurs directly after the cessation of major wars (see, History of Veterans, this paper.) and tends to tail off after 4-5 years. This, coupled with the fact that through our day-to-day practice it is becoming increasingly obvious that most veterans do not see themselves as primarily being oppressed as veterans. Rather, from our experience, veterans are not up-rising because they experience basically the same oppression as most working class people. The only exception to this phenomenon was the Bonus March, fully 15 years after World War I. However, vets were not organizable as a constituency because their demands were economist and therefore laid no basis for real organizing possibilities.

Again, we realize that conditions are different in different areas of the country. However, we think that at this time, we can accurately generalize that to focus on organizing veterans would be disastrous to the continuation of our organization as a fighting ally of the people.

The question of the political line of an organization is of paramount importance. Whether it recognizes it or not, the political line of an organization is the reflection of its political viewpoint and method with which it analyzes conditions and acts upon them. Therefore, the political line, tactics and policies. Therefore, the political line of an organization is of paramount importance.

The fundamental premise of the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge and the fundamental dividing line between the two great camps of philosophy, materialism and idealism, is whether or not one recognizes the objective existence of the material world, independent of man's will, that will can only reflect the material world. Whether one recognizes the existence of matter, of objective reality and of objective truth standing outside one's consciousness is the cornerstone of materialism and of the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge.

One point is that dialectics cannot be learned solely through book study. It must be learned by putting our thoughts into practice, revolving around the concrete conditions that exist within any given circumstance and then examining the theory and practice. Stalin says that "theory is the experience of the working class movement in its general aspects" and summed up from the experiences.

At this point in time, the first practical step that a revolutionary can take toward internalizing the dialectical method is to strive to understand the tremendous historical developments which have taken place in our times: capitalism and the present state of imperialism and the development of socialism.

"The method and means of approach suited to the concrete conditions prevailing in these countries must be learned, mastered and applied." Dimitroff, United Front Against Fascism, p. 4.

At this point in time, especially in view of the fact that the Party exists to help us with the task of implementing concrete action within the development of a UFAI, we should choose a working method.

"The present situation, sectarianism, self-satisfied sectarianism, is a danger to all those who are engaged in our struggle for the realization of the United Front. 'Sectarianism, satisfaction with narrowness, its divorce from the real situation, its simplified methods of solving the most complex problems of the working class movement, its reliance on stereotyped schemes.'" Dimitroff, United Front Against Fascism, p. 5.

Let us say that reform movements are backward or counter-revolutionary. We will discuss this point shortly. We do not see anything as benefits as reformist, but simply that we correctly identify our priorities through scientific analysis. We must constantly remind ourselves of the differences between a bourgeois outlook and a socialist outlook, "the former being the social irresponsibility of putting economics in command of politics or the latter being the social responsibility of putting politics in command of economics". James and Grace Boggs. June 1974.

Although we would prefer that the majority of our membership accept the UFAI concept, we realize that the nature of a mass organization only dictates that members have unity around the recognition of oppression that they are all experiencing. The commitment of advanced elements of our organization should be to educate the members from the minimum program of recognition of oppression to the maximum program of the United Front Against Imperialism.

## Focus and Base

A focus is a central point, a center of activity, attraction or attention. For a mass organization in the anti-imperialist movement, the political focus has to encompass both the minimum and maximum program. Failure for it to do so leaves a mass organization without the ability to move the masses from one to the other.

What is the base of a political organization? This is a question which has not been concretely addressed in the struggle now taking place within VVAW-WSO. The positions put forward by many people suggest that base can be equated with membership. This is incorrect, especially within a mass organization where there is no clear and universally applied definition of what qualifies someone for membership. The base of an organization is made up of not only its membership, but it includes the segments whose needs it serves and more specifically those people who relate to the organization through the political activities it conducts. In other words, and applied to VVAW-WSO, those people who relate to the organized activity, either nationally or locally, be they specific projects, educational events, or mass actions have to be recognized as part of our base. The programs and decisions we make have to not only represent but serve their interests and those of the broader segments of society who it is possible for us to move.

This definition of the base of an organization or any political grouping becomes clearer when applied to other forms; for example a communist party or a united front. Is the base of a communist party its membership? Obviously not! The base of a communist party is the proletariat and those who embrace proletarian ideology. Is the base of the United Front those organizations and individuals who participate in it in an organized fashion? Again, obviously not! The base of a United Front is the classes and stratas whose interests it serves and who look to it for leadership.

There is a dialectical relationship between the focus and base in the development of any organization. The N.O. says that our focus will determine our base. This is incorrect and a denial of that dialectical development. Any organization's base will determine its focus, which when implemented in practice will determine the development of the base. Historically, for VVAW-WSO, we originally had a veterans base which took on an anti-war focus. This veterans based organization took on an anti-war focus because U.S. imperialism in S.E. Asia was one of the sharpest and clearest contradictions in the material conditions of veterans lives. This anti-war focus drew non-veteran anti-war elements into the organization and broadened our base. This broader base brought a wider range of social practice into the organization which has led to the development of a conscious anti-imperialist focus. Class-conscious elements are developing within the organization as a result of our day-to-day practice around the struggle against imperialism at home and abroad. The dialectical progression from base to focus, implemented through practice to broader base to broader focus has developed the organization beyond the point where we can say we have a veterans and G.I. base.

written by the National Office and put forward in our position paper just prior to the Buffalo National Steering Committee Meeting in August. Our analysis is not presented as a point-by-point, demo-by-demo, NSCM-by-NSCM analysis because there is much that we agree with in the N.O. analysis. Therefore, if you do not see commentary on the RAW march or other items, please do not feel that we don't consider them important historical events. We do, but this is not the time to write a 400 page historical document to agree with each other on many points and not clarify the heart of some very basic disagreements with that analysis. We also think that since so many regions fully supported the N.O. position paper at the last NSCM, that it is a good basis for this discussion. A clear understanding of the historical development of VVAW-WSO is key in assisting us in the resolution of the struggle going on within our organization.

The beginning of the history 1967-1972 does not mention strongly enough the influence that the entire anti-war movement had in shaping the political growth and struggles of the organization. We were not just an angry veterans group out there going the struggle alone. In fact, moralism, guilt-tripping and a belief in the ruling class concept of democratic, legal institutions and their opportunist leadership were the order of the day. (All we are saying is give peace a chance.) The justified anger of veterans having served in an imperialist war was channeled into these types of political struggle. Winter Soldier Investigations became a sort of religious confessional (as all the liberals recoiled and said - tell me more - isn't war terrible); we pleaded with the ruling class representatives, spouted the words that the anti-war movement wanted to hear - Vets for McGovern. These actions were an outgrowth of a political outlook that had not yet focussed on a clear and common enemy. We were not born an anti-imperialist organization. We became one through development and struggle.

The development of class consciousness plays a crucial role in our development as an organization. Working class people are receptive to anti-imperialist politics because that is the nature of their real day-to-day struggle. Veterans, in and out of the military, have experienced in a very direct way the contradictions of the system. Anti-imperialist politics and struggle and anti-imperialist organizations do not drop out of the sky. In fact, they develop and their development is not as smooth as the N.O. position paper suggests. The mistakes that we've made are clearly part of our history, as are the lessons that we've learned in making these mistakes. It is not mentioned that in Miami - Operation Last Patrol that VVAW acted as a sort of para-military organization and took on the complete task of security in acting as the police of the movement. This error, which has been significantly corrected, comes most directly from a tendency within the organization which has not been corrected: veterans' chauvinism. The analysis of Last Patrol does not point out that at that time there was really no clear analysis of those Democratic and Republican delegates as ruling class representatives. In fact, VVAW had delegates (18) on the floor at the Democratic convention who did a large amount of

...-WSO. (Isn't this study to put forward an accurate picture of this portrayal of VVAW-WSO, while inaccurate, would not affect the internal resolution of the questions that face us, except that it is linked to direct efforts at manipulation within the organization. A clear example is the formation of chapters and regions of VVAW-WSO by RU. This serves to push a particular line through a mechanical manipulation of our "democratic" processes, rather than through applying principled political struggle and political education of the masses.)

The nature of the "democratic" processes in VVAW-WSO lends itself to th hinderance, instead of the positive development of this struggle. We think it is necessary to address ourselves to the task of analyzing and restructuring our internal organization before struggles such as this can be resolved in a way that genuinely represents the masses in the organization. We see the necessity for more in-depth investigation and research into the "upsurge of veterans", coupled with a scientific analysis of the concrete conditions of imperialism today; specifically keying on resistance to imperialism in third world countries and colonies and here in the beast itself. The different tendencies in VVAW-WSO can only be resolved on the basis of open and principled education and political struggle. This means that positions and criticisms have to be raised in a way that carries the development of the organization forward. As part of this process the distinctions between the lines being put forward will have to be sharpened and tested in practice on a broad scale. Only then will it be possible to label this a "two line struggle" for only then will two lines clearly emerge. Unity, Struggle, Unity means unity for all, as we come to a consensus, based on practice and illuminated by theory, as to the correct path for our organization to follow.

"Concrete analysis of concrete conditions, Lenin said, is the most essential thing in Marxism, the living soul of Marxism." Lacking an analytical approach, many of our comrades do not want to go deeply into complex matters, to analyze and study them over and over again, but like to draw simple conclusions which are either absolutely affirmative or absolutely negative. From now on we should remedy this state of affairs. (Our Study and the Current Situation, April 12, 1944, Mao Tse Tung, Selected Works Volume III, p. 165)



direct work in support of govern and indirect support in the form of such innocuous programs as 'Vets Say No to Nixon', in the hope that the Democrats would correct our misguided foreign policy. This was the general state of the entire anti-war movement. We were not at this time an anti-imperialist organization.

The analysis of our support for the Cairo United Front, no longer a national project, does not clarify the problems that developed in that program. In fact, it is pure hindsight to state that the program in support of the United Front recognized the "links between imperialism abroad and at home". The program, in essence, was a project to support black people attacked by a racist police department and other racist organizations and at the same time to support an economic boycott of white businesses. This program was a clear recognition of racism, but was undertaken in a patronizing and missionary fashion. These are major factors in the program's being dropped as a national project. We know today that there are links between imperialism at home and abroad, but continued scientific investigation, concrete struggle, and theoretical development will be necessary to see these links clearly. To say that we recognized these links ignores the critical development of an understanding of racism and the right of self-determination that is on-going in this organization.

1973 is a crucial year for the understanding of our development as an anti-imperialist organization. The N.O. analysis does not offer a dialectical understanding of the importance of the year. From their analysis we could probably label 1973 as the year of the 'grope' - groping here, groping there, wandering around in the dark without any clear path. This form of analysis disregards dialectical development and struggle and it epitomizes confusion as the order of the day. This analysis is subjective; it is an accurate statement about how 1973 affected us as individuals, but it does not do justice to our collective struggle during that year.

The January 1973 inaugural demonstration is a case in point. We see the inaugural demo as a qualitative leap in the political development of our organization, and yet there is little mention of it in the N.O. analysis. This was the largest demo in the history of VVAW and it was there that we broke away from the liberal-democratic, milk-sop moralism of what then constituted the guiding force of the anti-war movement. We marched as a separate contingent (at that time an anti-imperialist contingent, although we didn't call it that). in full support of the struggles of the peoples of Indochina in the fight against imperialism. This is the point where we took a great leap as a national organization in the struggle against imperialism. After the demonstration and the signing of the peace accords, our continued activity as an organization, in contrast to the relative inactivity of the anti-war movement, we see as a result of our developing anti-imperialist consciousness and continued support of the Vietnamese peoples' struggle to defeat imperialism.

It was in 1973 that the Winter Soldier concept "took root"; the seed of that concept had been germinating for some time and it took root because in reality the organization was broader than a veterans organization. The thrust of our politics had become clearly anti-imperialist since VVAW-WSO was one of the most

visible organizations in the movement, increasing numbers of people joined the organization to oppose imperialism. To say that the Winter Soldier Concept took root because of the confusion in our search for ways to fight imperialism and that it was intended as the Mass Organization of the movement and the United Front does not reflect a clear method of investigation into the political forces that led up to its implementation. We were, of course, confused and in a state of disarray because the anti-war movement that we were a part of and supported by fell apart. It was frustrating and confusing - but then we needed to clearly understand our involvement with the 'give peace a chance' crowd. To speak just of confusion and not concretize the political struggle that was going on is at the very least a lack of investigation and at the worst overt subjectivity and position-baiting. (This line follows the principle that the best way to win a political argument is to relegate the opposing position to the realm of the absurd.)

In fact there was a real political struggle taking place in all the confusion. One aspect of it was the struggle to combat veterans' chauvinism. This is part of the struggle that is on-going in the development of class consciousness in our attempt to free ourselves from the domination of bourgeois ideology which seeks to control all aspects of our lives. In September of 1972 we were already seeing the necessity of this struggle. The inclusion of the following quote illustrates the fact that there was a conscious political struggle taking place within our organization, which was denied in the presentation of our history in the NO position paper.

"Since a veterans' organization by its very nature excludes the participation of non-vets, both men and women, there is a structural barrier precluding further development. In the case of VVAW this must also include the realization that fewer and fewer veterans of Viet Nam will be returning with the U.S. military's continuing shift to technological warfare and the use of comprador puppet regimes. When the war in Indochina actually ends much of the rationale for a purely veterans organization is negated. We do not intend to glorify in any way the status of being a veteran, justify our participation in the U.S. military or create chauvinistic, elitist notions of veterans being the vanguard of the American revolution. We do realize, however, that there will be a continuing need for a veterans organization. Veteran service programs should and will continue. Similarly, the sense of group identity particular to veterans is a valid basis for organizing groups for political action. At the same time we see the need for VVAW of being part of an organization open to all people, whether they are vets or not, who are commonly dedicated to the struggle of building a new society. An organization of Winter Soldiers could conceivably be created that would be open to all people who are in spirit and in action truly consistent with the goals that we are struggling for. VVAW would be a part of this organization, not the chauvinistic counterpart to a VVAW women's auxiliary or a VVAW non-vet auxiliary. This concept of such an all more encompassing organization would permit VVAW to grow and respond to the need of becoming an evermore sophisticated and relevant organization for realizing and accomplishing major social change."

Palo Alto, Sept. 1972.

VVAW membership drive. Nor was it just a clever way to grant card-carrying privileges to the significant portion of our membership who were non-vets, some of whom were in leadership positions. The Winter Soldier concept implementation was not an effort at quantitative change, but clearly a qualitative shift in our understanding of the tasks that lie before us. Although not clearly understood, the structural change in the organization has enabled us to understand that our role as a mass organization is to educate the masses to recognize the source of their oppression and to motivate them to fight the common enemy, imperialism. As the organization progressed from being a mass anti-war organization, the strengthening of organizational unity was evident. Through input from the non-vets as well as the vets, a strong anti-imperialist outlook was developing. It is important to note that while vets had a first-hand view of imperialism over-seas, non-vets, through day-to-day struggle here at home also experienced imperialism first-hand. The ghettos, racist prisons and big corporations along with the mansions on the other side of the track are not invisible. The force created by the joining of vets and non-vets resulted in a political threat which CREEP could not tolerate. That is why VVAW was attacked as an organization in Gainesville. The N.O. position paper shows no understanding of the significance of the Winter Soldier concept. They do not speak to the fact that non-vets had played a major role in the struggles of our organization from late 1971 on. While the Winter Soldier concept recognized this fact, it was also a developing recognition that we had to put anti-imperialist politics in command and build an anti-imperialist, not anti-war, organization.

At this point there is a basic point to be made about building a 'fighting organization'. VVAW and then VVAW/WSO has always been a militant, fighting organization. What is important is that not at all times did we clearly understand exactly who and what we were fighting, or how to do it. We continue to achieve this understanding only on the basis of our anti-imperialist analysis and struggle in concrete practice that conforms to the principles of our theoretical understanding. Our Gainesville actions need to be seen from this perspective. The N.O. presents Gainesville as the essence of a WSO action: the product of an unfocussed organization. Any real analysis of Gainesville does not support this position. Gainesville did not culminate only in a disorganized national demonstration. The arrests, the trial, the political defense work and the effort at mobilizing masses of people to fight back against the use of prisons and the court system as tools of political oppression has resulted in a national organizational commitment to defend political prisoners. The political defense work that we do around the Leavenworth Brothers, the Attica Brothers, Gary Lawton and many others is not accidental or pure response. It is the continuous development of the lessons that we learned in being attacked by CREEP and the federal government. We were forced to do an analysis of who the legal system represents, how it works, why it works the way it does, and how to fight it. In this concrete struggle, we started to see more clearly some of those "links" between imperialism at home and abroad. In seeing those links, our practice at a national level has come to reflect the things that we've learned.

Again referring to Gainesville, the NO states that "the fact that other organizations did not participate in that demonstration further reflected our lack of understanding of our obligation to help build the United Front". We find this criticism in fact correct, but we find it a completely opportunist method in the form in which it is put forward. Why isn't this criticism put forward for Dewey Canyon III, the RAW March, the Christmas bombing demos, Jan. 20 - in fact, just about all of our demonstrations before realizing the correct method of the United Front - which emerged at what point? We find this form of historical analysis to be based on subjectivity and not objective investigation. We can also see through the tone of the sum-up of Gainesville as a VVAW/WSO action being emphasized as an unfocused action to be merely a way to show what a confused state Winter Soldier brought about. This is not a correct form of investigation, but is based upon subjectivity, manipulation, opportunism and position-baiting. If this is the way that one has to win an ideological point, it is not a correct form of summation. In fact, we did not take up the building of the U.F. at Gainesville because we had never in any concrete way put the U.F. forward in any of our practice prior to Gainesville.

"Through the period since we became VVAW/WSO one fact has shone through our practice: those chapters which continued to grow and strengthen (numerically and politically) have worked around a specific organizing focus, and, in most places no matter what the composition of the chapter in terms of veterans or non-veterans, this focus has been around amnesty with particular emphasis on vets issues."

#### NO Position Paper

We find this statement in error. We find the Buffalo Chapter is one of the strongest chapters in VVAW/WSO. What form of investigation did the NO make before arriving at this all-encompassing statement confirming the reason for their own political outlook. We as a chapter have asked NO members repeatedly to come to Buffalo to visit us and find out what our politics and practice are, to no avail. We know we are not alone in being ignored by the NO. Frequently NO members were within 100 miles of us, but we weren't informed until their visit was over, which would have been an opportunity to meet together, but was missed. The NO has an obligation to visit chapters at all levels throughout the course of our work, but has failed to do this. We would assume that this investigation would take place before such a statement was made on something so important as the direction and focus of our future organizational work, but from what we can see, this has not been done.

It seems that the NO has played a divisive role, playing up the political work of chapters which reflect the national office position in their political work, particularly the Milwaukee and Chicago chapters. We support the concrete work of these chapters. But the hub of the world is quite obviously not in the Chicago area (nor the Buffalo area). This seems a sham way to verify the reasons for building an anti-imperialist veterans movement. Perhaps it is more correct to observe that chapters which have done any form of programmatic work are those that have grown and developed strengths. Our

Chapter has not had an emphasis on vets issues although we have done work around them and intensive work around all national programs. No, we have not done a basic investigatory study into the politics and practice on a chapter by chapter basis, nor have we had the opportunity. The national office has that responsibility and should rightfully perform that form of investigation. We can only say that we don't think that this concrete form of investigation has taken place.

"You can't solve a problem? Well, get down and investigate the present facts and its past history! When you have investigated a problem thoroughly, you will know how to solve it. Conclusions invariably come after investigation, and not before. Only a blockhead cudgels his brains on his own or together with a group, to "find a solution" or "evolve an idea" without making any investigation. It must be stressed that this cannot possibly lead to any effective solution or any good idea."

Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, Oppose Book Worship, May, 1930.

## THE HISTORY OF THE VETERANS MOVEMENT

### General Observations

The United States has been in seven major wars in its history as a sovereign country. These are the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korean War and the still continuing Indochina War. After each of these wars, and most of the smaller wars and 'interventions' as well, the ruling class in society has been challenged by its returning veterans. This is not a history of veterans' struggles; various levels of VVAW-WSO are giving that history the serious study it deserves. It is an attempt to analyze, on the basis of the study done so far, the essential factors of this history of veterans' struggles as well as the means by which the ruling class has tried to stifle these struggles. Each postwar period has had at least three factors in common. Generally speaking, the sharper the class contradictions and antagonisms in society in any given postwar period, the more these factors come into play. These factors are:

1. Veterans return to widespread predictions of social and individual unrest.
2. Veterans face genuinely oppressive conditions.
3. The system falls back on appeals to veterans' chauvinism, combined with force when necessary, to maintain control.

1. At the end of each war, there has been a widespread fear of the effect a sudden influx of violence-prone veterans will have on civil society. Generally, this has been combined with a paternalistic concern for the welfare of the returned 'heroes'. After the Revolutionary War, there was a widespread belief that the discharged members of the Continental Army were all looters and scoundrels. After World Wars I and II, newspapers were filled with advice on how to deal with returned husbands and sons. The way Vietnam veterans have been portrayed in movies and on TV shows is a clear example of this. The press contributes heavily to this after each war by sensationalistic reportage. Even well-meaning individuals like some of the psychologists and sociologists who helped popularize PVS as an issue, contribute to this fear in society. Our original work around PVS, before we started to reach a political understanding of its causes, also contributed to this. The effects of such fears are to create a general distrust of veterans among the general population and to make vets feel that they are individually to blame for their problems and that there are no solutions other than cynicism and apathy.

Another more important way this specter of fear and violence serves to stifle resistance is by raising a threat of paramilitary action by war veterans as a wedge to drive between veterans and the general population. Examples are the fears, heavily exploited by the ruling class, that World War I veterans were 'infected' with Bolshevism. Also, the extensive red-baiting that accompanied the Bonus March. A more recent example is the sensationalistic - and totally false - 'revelations' about the existence of a gang of Black vets called 'de Mau Mau' who were bent on anti-White terrorism in Chicago a few years back. Such threats can then be used as a justification for repressive action. An ironic example is the forming of police paramilitary SWAT teams, made up largely of Vietnam veterans, to counter 'terrorism'.



... psychotic and the paramilitary action are usually generated and spread by people who are not rank and file vets. In turn, these hysterical predictions are exploited by those who have the most to lose in a revolutionary situation-the ruling class and its allies.

2. After each war, contradictions arose that directly oppressed vets. This was true after the Revolution and it is true today-moreso in fact, because of the class nature of society and the crisis facing imperialism. These contradictions take two forms: the first is those contradictions that are directly related to participation in the military and the second are those contradictions that are classwide, or which affect a particular group such as Blacks or Women, but which affect veterans within the class or the group to a disproportionate extent. This will be dealt with in the section "What is the Oppression of Veterans".

3. Following each war, as veterans began to confront the oppression they faced, whether as vets, as workers, or as members of a minority, the ruling class has tried to appeal to them as a privileged group in order to isolate them and cut them off from their friends and allies. Some of the means used to do this have been: official sponsoring of exclusively veterans groups to promote special interests; the granting of legitimate veterans demands in such a way as to further the social isolation of vets; and the distortion of the true nature of military service by militaristic displays of glory and honor designed to create an image of veterans as being more patriotic or self-sacrificing than others. While veterans' chauvinism has always been present, the present collusion of the military, the VA and the reactionary veterans organizations has served to institutionalize it to a considerable degree. This will be dealt with in the section "What is Veterans' Chauvinism".

When appeals to chauvinism fail, the state will resort to force. This can take many forms. It can be open terror, as in the "Red Summer" of 1919. It can be open force, as used against the Bonus March. And it can be legal force, as in the trial of the Gainesville Eight. Occasionally, appeals to chauvinism are concurrent with the use of force. One example is the use of the American Legion in the 1920's as a strike-breaking force against workers, many of whom were veterans also. Another example is the assault on the NYC VVAW/WSO Chapter at Shea Stadium during an "Honor Vietnam Era Vets Night" last summer.

These factors have existed after every war, although their relative weight varies according to the political and economic situation. Generally, the ruling class has sought to exploit both the first and third factors to stifle resistance to oppressive conditions. Although the idea of psychotic or terroristic veterans may seem to be in direct contradiction with the idea of veterans as a privileged group, they have served the same end-to keep veterans from organizing in the most effective way to confront and resolve the oppression they face.

There are more observations which can be made on the veterans movement in this country, but which lack the historical consistency which the above factors show. Briefly stated, they are:



4. In the past, this country has been largely able to absorb dissent, at least that of veterans, in its Western territories. Disaffected Revolutionary War veterans were among the first people to settle the Ohio Valley and the midwest. Civil War veterans, especially those from the Confederacy, flocked to the free land in the West in the years after the war. The West was still viewed as a Mecca of sorts during the Great Depression of the 1930's. With the closing of the West in this century, this factor probably won't enter the picture.

5. Black veterans have rarely organized around veterans oppression, but instead have directed their efforts at fighting National oppression. Also, in the past, Blacks tended to view participation in this country's wars as having a liberating effect. Blacks who served in the Revolution or the War of 1812 were generally freed after their service. To the 200,000 plus Blacks troops of the Union Army, the Civil War was a war of national liberation. Segregation in both World Wars put most Blacks in the position of having to excel as soldiers to prove an equality that should have been theirs from the start. What effect the 1948 Bourgeois "desegregation" of the military may have in the current period remains to be seen. Also, such factors as the migration of the Black Nation from the deep South and the growth of a Black proletariat may make significant differences.

6. Except for officers' society, there was little desire on the part of veterans to organize as such until after the Civil War. This may be due to the unstructured nature of the military prior to that time. Before the Civil War, there was a small core of regular troops augmented for short periods of time by militia units. The bulk of war veterans had been militiamen and probably did not tend to view themselves as soldiers in the sense we know. Hence, they probably did not view themselves as veterans to any great degree either.

7. The only example this country has of veterans who did not win in the war they took part in is the Confederacy. There veterans were instrumental in the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. Veterans were also a major factor in the Bolshevik Revolution and the rise of Fascism in Germany and Italy. Currently, many police agencies make an attempt to recruit Vietnam veterans for such units as SWAT teams and tactical patrol squads. What effect this will have in the growing revolutionary situation must be seriously studied.

#### The Bonus March

The Bonus March of 1932 is, in a sense, the exception to most of what is listed above. Not only did it occur 14 years after the end of World War I, but it was a genuinely spontaneous movement that included large numbers of Black veterans. It had a considerable impact on working class struggles in the depression, as well as on the way vets were treated after World War II. It is essential to the future of our political work that we do as complete and objective an analysis of this event as possible. Hopefully, this, along with the articles in Winter Soldier, will serve as a start. Two areas of documentation which are lacking in this work are oral interviews with participants and documents from the CP/USA and the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League (WESL).

## Background

In the years immediately following World War I, there was a wave of labor and radical militancy the frequently involved veterans. In the Seattle general strike of 1919, a "Labor War Veterans Guard" was formed to defend the workers interests. In other parts of the Northwest, the IWW was instrumental in setting up "Soldiers and Sailors Councils" based on the Russian Soviets. In one Eastern city, a rank and file vets paper, The Home Sector, reported that 30 percent of the radicals arrested in the 1920 Palmer raids there were ex-servicemen. On at least two occasions in the early 1920's veterans led armed groups of miners in tactical formations into gun battles with scabs and goons.

In addition, vets faced conditions that were directly oppressive to them-the Veterans Bureau, forerunner of the VA, was inefficient, racked with corruption and unable to meet the very real needs of returning vets. After an initial burst of enthusiasm greeting the first veterans to return from France, they were looked upon as trouble-makers and burdens. For the most part, though, there was little militant action directed at these conditions.

Much resentment was directed at war profiteers-both individuals and corporations. In 1924, Congress was forced to pass a bill calling for "adjusted compensation certificates" that would pay a bonus to vets based on the length and nature of their service. These certificates did not come due until 1945, a fact that led many to describe them as "Tombstone Bonuses".

Black veterans were also active after World War I. They stood in the leadership of the fight against National oppression. Because of this, they were singled out for lynching and police terror in the "Red Summer" of 1919. In many of the riots that occurred that year, Black veterans led armed resistance to their attackers. In at least one instance, Knoxville, Tennessee, they beat back attacking National Guardsmen armed with machine guns with little harm to themselves.

By 1925, however, most of this activity had died away. While the bourgeoisie fostered an image of prosperity and growth, the working class and National minorities could barely survive. Only the reactionary veterans organizations grew-the American Legion, the VFW, etc. Although they stressed the common experience as veterans, their appeal was pretty much limited to ex-officers and vets from bourgeois and petti-bourgeois backgrounds.

In 1929 the Great Depression began and vets-like the rest of the working class-were hit full force by the shattered economy. The demand for immediate payment of the Bonus began to take hold. It was a highly popular one. Even the VFW started a petition campaign for it. The Legion originally backed it, then reversed its stand under pressure from big business. By early 1932, a Bill was in Congress calling for immediate payment of the Bonus. Rank and file vets groups, including the WESL, appeared in Congress and demanded passage. The government stated that it would be inflationary and that payment was out of the question.

## The March Begins

In April, 1932, the WESL put out a call for a demonstration in Washington, D.C. and began building for it in the cities where they were strongest-New York, Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland. At the same time a group of about 250 vets got together in Oregon, apparently unaware of the WESL call, and decided to go to Washington for the Bonus. They formed six companies and elected officers. A right-winger named Walter Waters got himself elected "Regimental Commander". The group rode boxcars to East St. Louis, where they were ordered stopped by railroad officials. In response, they blockaded tracks and faced down six companies of National Guard. Their stand generated considerable publicity and veterans all over the country began making plans to go the D.C.

By May 31, 1932, there were about 1,300 marchers in Washington calling themselves the "Bonus Expeditionary Force" (BEF), and more on the way. Waters called together the leader of the contingents and formed an Executive Committee of Seven (XC) with himself as leader. The DC police chief, Pelham Glassford, a Brigadier General in the war, promised cooperation with Waters and was named secretary-treasurer of the BEF. He used his power to break the BEF up into different encampments, mostly in Maryland, and to control the distribution of food. He also worked with the XC to set up a BEF MP force. This force became Waters' and Glassford's basic means of control. Glassford later said of this vigilante force:

The BEF Military Police worked intimately with the Metropolitan Police under my command...where the Metropolitan Police under my command had to stop as a matter of law, the BEF MP's carried on.

Glassford put out a call to state governments and the rail monopolies to prevent new Bonus Marchers from arriving in DC. He also moved to cut off food and water supplies to the encampments. Vets kept arriving and the people of DC and the area kept feeding them until he backed down. Although the leadership of all the reactionary vets organizations- the Legion, the VFW and DAV, etc. -condemned the BEF, their rank and file actively supported it by helping marchers en route and supplying food to the encampments. By the end of the first week of June, there were close to 8,000 veterans in DC, some with families.

## The Role of the WESL

Although the WESL put out the first call for a demonstration in DC, it's pretty apparent that they weren't prepared for the spontaneous reaction that followed. Nor were they prepared for the speed with which Waters and Glassford moved to co-opt any revolutionary effect the BEF might have. After the first vets began arriving, the WESL opened an office in DC and began putting out its positions. (Without any WESL literature, it's hard to tell what these positions were-generally they seemed to concentrate on demanding rank and file elections, abolishing the MP force, and being more militant in the demand of the Bonus.)

Many of the vets organized by the WESL rejected Waters' undemocratic leadership and moved or were thrown out of the "official" encampments. About 600 moved into some abandoned buildings on Pennsylvania

Ave., near the White House. The WESL leadership put out a call for more organizing of vets to join the BEF and began doing propaganda and agitational work in the encampments. Harassment and beatings were so common they had to leaflet surreptitiously. It's possible that Waters' MP force murdered some of the WESL workers, whose bodies were found floating in the Potomac.

In New York City, a WESL contingent of 400 vets took over the 23rd St. Ferry to Hoboken. There they were marched from railyard to railyard until it was apparent the authorities were stalling. At the same time, a group of 148 vets organized by reactionaries was supplied with food, transportation and funds by the "police and citizens of Newark".

The WESL called for a march on Congress for June 8th. The XC responded by calling a "Red, White and Blue" parade for the evening of June 7th. About 2,000 marchers participated in this parade which, under heavy police guard, avoided the White House and disbanded before entering the Capitol Grounds. The next day only a fraction of that number showed up for the WESL march and it was called off. At no time in the first weeks of the Bonus March was the WESL able to mobilize many vets to attend their actions.

#### The BEF Settles In

By mid-June, there were about 20,000 Bonus Marchers in DC. Most were in four BEF encampments; the largest, Camp Marks in Anacostia Flats, held 12,000 people (including 300 children). Internal splits in the XC and the failure of the WESL June 8th march allowed Waters to consolidate his hold on the BEF. New contingents were registered in a ceremony which involved saluting the flag and taking a pledge against "liquor and communism". Known WESL sympathizers were ejected from the camps. Contingents from the South were allowed to segregate their areas. The MP and informant network was so heavy that many Marchers refused to talk to strangers.

Contingents continued to arrive in DC. They were met at the DC Line by Waters' MP's and told to tone down their banners and signs. 200 permanently crippled vets arrived from the National Soldiers Home in Tennessee. A contingent of 1,000, under its elected leader, John Pace, arrived from Michigan and Ohio. In Toledo, they had taken over a railyard and occupied a roundhouse where they were surrounded by 300 police with tear gas and machine guns. 12,000 people showed up to offer support and supply them with food until the police backed down. By late June, a daily newspaper, The BEF News, was being published.

In mid-June, the House passed the Bonus Bill and sent it to the Senate, where it was scheduled for a vote on June 17th. That day, Glassford had key drawbridges raised, isolating most of the BEF in their encampments. About 10,000 vets managed to reach the city before it was announced that the bill was overwhelmingly defeated. The police, with Waters' backing, tried to move the vets back to their encampments. At this Waters' hold began cracking and a number of contingents moved into DC, including Pace's contingent and most of the Marchers from New York and Chicago. They joined with the WESL to form the Central Rank and File Committee (CRFC). The BEF broke into half a dozen different factions and Waters resorted

Two days later, Waters regained power in a rigged election that was never even held in Camp Marks. He immediately purged his opponents from the XC and reformed his MP's into a company of "shock troops" armed with riot batons. He ordered an hour of drill every morning for the entire BEF and stated:

If any man in the BEF refuses to carry out my orders, he will be dragged out of Washington by the MP's. To hell with Glassford and civil law.

Around this time, the CRFC called its first action. Waters had the MP's seal off the camps to prevent anyone from joining them and threatened them with reactionary violence. To preserve unity, the CRFC called their march off.

By mid-July, there were between 25,000 and 30,000 vets in the area, of which 1,000 were camping directly on the Capitol grounds. Vice President Curtis ordered a detachment of 100 Marines to the Capitol grounds; 35 of them refused to leave their barracks and the rest refused to obey any orders once there. Congress prepared to take another vote and Waters marched to the Capitol with 10,000 marchers. In order to regain his hold on the BEF, he arranged with Glassford to be arrested—two times—to chants of "We Want Waters". Afterwards he claimed he won major concessions from Glassford without ever saying what they were. Immediately after that, Congress adjourned without passing the Bonus.

#### The End of the BEF

With Congress adjourned, many of the Marchers began drifting out of Washington. Waters' hold was slipping fast and he resorted to open fascism by calling for the formation of an organization to be named the "Kakhi Shirts". He said of it:

Inevitably, such an organization brings up comparison with the Fascisti of Italy and the Nazis of Germany. For five years, Hitler was lampooned and derided. But today he controls Germany. Mussolini was driven from Italy because of his political views. But today he is a world figure.

By late July, the CRFC was becoming a strong and militant force. They began calling marches on the White House to demand that Hoover order Congress into special session. On July 20th, Pace led 7 different attempts to picket the White House—each from a different direction. Each time they were stopped by police and finally Pace was arrested. At the same time, the government reached the decision to clear the BEF out of Washington:

On the 21st, an order was issued to the BEF to be out by August 4th. All government equipment on loan to the BEF was recalled and eviction orders were prepared for the abandoned buildings the CRFC occupied. Military units were placed on alert in the DC area and most GI's who had served in World War I or who had expressed any sympathy with the BEF were placed on special duty. Camps where weapons were stored were placed under especially heavy guard.

On the 25th, Pace was released on bail and promptly led a group to picket the White House. They were attacked by police and Pace and others were arrested for incitement to riot. Around this

time it was reported that members of Waters' XC had been receiving \$20 a day from Glassford. On the 26th, Waters was informed of the Government's plans to move against the BEF on the 28th. He told no one.

On the afternoon of July 28th, "Bloody Thursday", the government made its move. Police were sent to clear the buildings on Pennsylvania Ave. occupied by the WESL. In the fighting there, one vet was killed and another fatally wounded. Immediately after that, army units commanded by Douglas MacArthur-infantry, cavalry and tanks-arrived and began to clear the city. The BEF fell back slowly and took many casualties in the street fighting, especially to the cavalry charges. Infantry in the rear burned and destroyed the belongings of the Marchers. A number of innocent bystanders were also injured by the army. The official explanation was that they panicked and run into the horses.

In the late afternoon, the army moved against the camps outside of DC using the same tactics. In the fight at Camp Marks, two infants died of gas poisoning. By the next morning the Bonus March was over and the veterans had dispersed.

#### Aftermath

The mayor of Johnstown, Pennsylvania offered to let the BEF encamp in a baseball park there until they had recovered. Waters accepted the offer and led about 2,000 vets and 400 dependants there where they found themselves put on display by local merchants as a tourist attraction. Some WESL workers also went along to continue agitation. After about two weeks of hunger and confusion, they disbanded.

Other Marchers were shunted forth between barricades manned by DC, Maryland and Virginia police until they finally found a way out of the area. The CRFC called for continued resistance in DC, but only a handful of Marchers responded. On the 29th, informants fingered about 50 of the most active CRFC members for arrest. The remainder were marched out of Washington by police. The government began spreading stories that most of the BEF participants were not vets, but were instead criminals, reds and aliens. A few people made attempts to capitalize on the name over the next few years, but these attempts failed. The Bonus March was over.

#### General Observations

It would be impossible to fully sum up the experience of the Bonus March and its political meaning at this point. Too much remains to be studied, both concerning the specifics of the March and the subsequent effect it had on workers' struggles in the 1930's. Some observations can be made, however:

a0 The Bonus March was a spontaneous response to the nationwide economic crisis-not to any conditions that were particularly oppressive to veterans. The Bonus was the most accessible means of relieving the crushing poverty they faced as unemployed workers or dispossessed farmers or failed tradesmen. To fight for it, they aligned themselves on the basis of their status as vets. Had there been a chance for other forms of relief- say, farm relief, many would have fought for it on that basis. Their identity as



veterans, however, probably led many to feel they had a special chance of achieving their demand.

b) The WESL was not the leading force of the Bonus March (except possibly in terms of political development). Their call for the March was in many ways coincidental with the spontaneous growth of the BEF. Nor were they ever in a position to lead more than a small percentage of vets during any part of the Bonus March. The intense red-baiting and paramilitary activity of the Waters clique kept them on the defensive for most of the March. It's possible that they were taken by surprise to the extent that they were unable to formulate any effective courses of action, but without thorough study of WESL propaganda and criticism, this is only conjecture.

c) For the most part, the Bonus Marchers were there solely to demand the payment of the Bonus. Few seemed to question either the nature of the political system or the validity of their military service in World War I—at least not while the March was still going on. In itself, this is fine, but there is no evidence that there was any effort to bring either capitalism or the nature of World War I into question by the WESL.

d) Vets' chauvinism was a strong factor in the co-optation of the Marchers' struggle. More than any other cause, it was chauvinism that allowed Waters and his cohorts to maintain the control they did over the BEF. Certainly, the MP and informant force was a factor, but it is hard to believe that 25,000 plus war veterans, none of them tied down with material possessions, could be that easily cowed. The fact remains that the majority of the BEF followed Waters' sell-out leadership to the end. Vets' chauvinism—the appeal to privilege—when combined with rabid anti-communism, was a potent force in both holding the BEF together and blunting its impact.

e) Regardless of its eventual effect, most participants felt the Bonus March to be a failure. There seems to have been little or no effort made to view the struggle for the Bonus in a long-range perspective. To most, it was seen as a one-shot attempt that failed. Thus, when Roosevelt signed the Bonus into law during the "New Deal", he was in a position to claim credit for it.

#### The Historical Importance of the Indochina War in the Development of the Veterans Movement

The Indochina War is the longest major war this country has been involved in. It is also the third deadliest in terms of casualties. A full analysis of this war is impossible here, but some of its unique factors—in terms of the historical experience of this country and its veterans' movements—should be briefly noted. (While the war continues in a comprador form, we are viewing it in the context of organizing U.S. veterans of the war. Therefore, past tense is used.)

i. It was an openly imperialist and neo-colonialist war in nature. It lacked the supportive rationales and legitimate purposes of earlier major wars. Unlike this country's earlier imperialist "interventions", it involved large numbers of draftees and was widely covered in the press.



2. It was a military defeat for the U.S. Because of its protracted nature and the peculiarities of the rotation system, many veterans don't consciously realize this. Most veterans, however, do agree that it was senseless and unnecessary.

3. The nature of a people's war, and the highly technological response of the U.S., stripped the Indochina experience of any sense of purpose or mission for most participants. The only logic of the war was that of personal survival.

4. There was no concurrent mobilization or dislocation of civil society. In addition, there was little awareness-much less appreciation-of the experiences of returning veterans.

5. The war was conducted entirely by a career-oriented military. Unlike earlier major wars where large-scale mobilization affected all levels of the military, this one was fought with a standing army that provided a professional officer and NCO corps whose interests were often totally at odds with those of their troops.

6. It was accompanied by large-scale social and cultural upheaval-a generation gap, the antiwar movement, Black struggles, the new left. While social and cultural change often accompanies war, the specific content of these changes is unique.

7. It was accompanied by a disintegration of the political institutions of this country. With the exception of the Confederacy, it's probable that no veterans of any of this country's wars have seen the institutions they supposedly fought for discredit themselves in such a short period of time.

8. There was a widespread disintegration of the military from within. The forms of personal and collective resistance to the conditions of the military were so widespread that, for a while at least, many of its components ceased to function. Again, the only parallel occurs in the Confederacy.

9. The "enemy" was openly communist. In view of the manner in which anti-communism was used against progressive struggles after both World Wars, even though the opposing sides were not communist, this may turn out to be significant. Given the courage and steadfast resistance of the Vietnamese people, compared with the corruption and brutality of the Saigon regime, this argument may have little or no effect on the veterans of this war.

## 7. OPPRESSION OF VETERANS

People have needs that must be met if they are to function in society as full and productive human beings. However, throughout the course of history, some groups of people have been systematically denied the resources to meet their needs. Groups that are denied the opportunity to fully meet their needs are being oppressed.

A group is oppressed because it lacks the political power to protect and advance its own interests. In the final analysis, a group's political power is determined by how much control it has over the forces which produce the necessities of life for society. An oppressor group controls enough of the means of production to allow it to meet its own needs, plus some of the needs of others. An oppressor group uses its economic control in the political field to ensure that oppressed groups don't unite to threaten the position of the oppressors. Within this framework, we can look at the oppression of veterans.

First, however, we must make a distinction between oppression and exploitation. Exploitation is the extraction of surplus value from the labor of workers. The working class produces enough to support both itself and the ruling class, but part of what it produces is stolen from it. Exploitation is a relationship between classes. It is rooted in the economic basis of society. Oppression is a relationship between groups of people with different social characteristics, such as race, class, sex, religion, etc. Oppressor groups oppress other groups on the basis of these characteristics. Oppression is an aspect of the political superstructural layer of society. Exploitation and oppression have always existed hand-in-hand throughout history, and they existed long before the present imperialist system. But it is exploitation that is primary. Ruling classes have always initiated and encouraged oppression to maintain their own particular exploitative system.

Most veterans suffer the same exploitation that other members of the working class face in this country. But, they also suffer a form of oppression that is directly related to their participation in the military. Examples of the needs that arise from this form of oppression are: medical treatment for military-related injuries, rehabilitation from military related drug addiction; and freedom from the stigma of bad discharges. The depth of this oppression is measured by the extent to which a society has the resources to meet veterans' legitimate readjustment needs and systematically fails to do so.

The fight against veterans' oppression has both a positive and negative side. The positive side is that veterans will broaden their understanding of the political struggle as well as make material gains that will contribute to their material well-being. The negative side is that veterans may tend to see the struggle to meet their needs as a narrow economist one, apart from the other struggles of the working class and oppressed peoples. There is no reason that this should happen. The productive capacity of advanced capitalism is such that all the legitimate needs of the people of this country could be easily met. What keeps this from taking place is the obsolete structure of capitalist economic relations-

## THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM

Any objective analysis of the goals and tasks facing the anti-imperialist movement, or any sections of it, has to include an understanding of the conditions of the imperialist system, the make-up of the forces opposed to it and what the major trends in the world today are. We recognize our limitations in summing this up at this point either as a chapter or an organization, because it's a task that we have not taken up in a scientific way. This effort was completely lacking in the position put forward by the NO. This has been a serious failure in the development of a clear two-line struggle. This is a rejection of the responsibility for investigation and study that falls to anyone who puts forward a political position.

A further understanding of the forces in the world today can only be reached through the development of our theory through practice and struggle. We hope that this will spark a dialogue that will carry forward the internal political education of our organization. This is not to advocate that VVAW/WSO develop a line on these questions as that is the role of a communist organization. We see that VVAW/WSO must remain a mass organization and that if it fails to carry forward political education among both its membership and its base it is sure to stagnate.

As we look to the world situation, we can see that revolution is the major trend. From the nations under colonial and neo-colonial domination to the bastions of imperialism itself, this system is being forced to take the defensive. Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, where its exploitation is most brutal and its oppression most severe. The peoples of the world are rising up against this super exploitation, particularly in the most exploited sector, the Third World. Third World struggles for liberation cut imperialism off from its markets and primary sources of cheap labor and raw materials, destroying its ability to expand.

In order to finance their defensive efforts and maintain profit, the imperialist powers must step up their attacks on poor and working people within their own borders. The brunt of these attacks are borne by the oppressed nationalities, women, youth and old people. Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Asian and Native American peoples face disproportionately high unemployment as they are the last to be hired and the first fired. This special oppression is perpetuated by the use of racism which enables the exploiters to divide the working class. Women are held as a reserve to be manipulated in and out of the labor force, at the worst conditions and lowest wages, to serve the interests of the ruling class. The use of sexism maintains women in their role as housekeepers and child care workers as well. Prisons and the military serve as receptacles for alienated working class youth who feel that they have no other prospects in their dismal futures. These conditions point clearly to the key struggles for the anti-imperialist movement to take up. The struggle will be hard and long, but the prospects are bright.

The way that the NO proposes that VVAW/WSO link up with these struggles does not express the genuine solidarity that we have with them. Only as this solidarity is strengthened will the anti-imperialist movement develop into a force capable of amashing the imperialist system.

... world people and racism and sexism we have to recognize that for primary contradiction that they have with the imperialist system. If we organize in a way that fails to grapple with those primary contradictions, we will fail to concretely link ourselves to those struggles, fail to build solidarity in the anti-imperialist movement and remove ourselves from the social practice needed to combat the tendencies of racism and sexism within ourselves. The position put forward by the National Office reduces dealing with racism and sexism to questions of expediency in base building. Racism and sexism are the twin pillars of bourgeois ideology that serve to divide the working class. The fact that there are Third World people and women in the military means that we must recognize the double oppression of these people and organize in a way that will build solidarity among all oppressed G.I.'s. It does not mean as the NO states, that we will be forced to deal with racism and sexism in an substantive way. We think the NO is correct that because racism is used by the military it will force the membership of VV/W/WSO "to begin dealing with racist practice and ideas in the same way that the struggle around women in the organization has lead the membership to deal with sexist practice and ideas." (our underline) Although the membership is beginning to develop some understanding of what sexist practice and ideas are, the way in which they have been "dealt with" has often been mechanical not political. We must combat sexism as a political ideology, not simply as a barrier to recruitment. This means not only supporting women in their fight against their oppression, but attacking sexism as a bourgeois ideology which serves to divide those who could be united in opposition to imperialism. Similarly, we must combat racism in a way that does more than deal with surface manifestations, although these are important struggles to take up. We have to combat racism not only as it affects Third World people directly, but as a second ideology prop which has penetrated all classes of American society and which likewise divides those who might be united against imperialism.

As a mass anti-imperialist organization, it is essential that the work of VVAW/WSO be linked on a national level to these struggles and that chapters be conscious of the need to lend material political support to them as an important part of our on-going work. Through this work, our membership and base will develop a greater ability to apply these struggles to their own lives.

One of the main weaknesses of the anti-war movement was the limited participation of working class people. This weakness was one reason it did not develop an anti-imperialist consciousness on a broader scale and limited its effectiveness in providing material support for the struggle of the Vietnamese people. It would be incorrect for VVAW/WSO to seek to become a working class organization. As a mass organization it can and should relate to many segments of U.S. society. However, because if the exploitation of the working class under imperialism and the role it must play in the destruction of imperialism, VVAW/WAO must participate in working class struggles, develop a more class conscious outlook and bring our anti-imperialist politics to the working class.

The work of any anti-imperialist organization would be incomplete if it did not in part provide support for the struggles for national liberation being waged within the Third World. It was the victory of the Vietnamese over the U.S. imperialists which turned the tide against its expansionist exploitation and dealt a sharp blow to

the entire system of imperialism. Although the leading forces within this victory were the Vietnamese themselves, forces throughout the world including the anti-war movement in the U.S. and its military helped in this effort. The Third World struggle for liberation and self-determination are a leading factor in the destruction of imperialism. Their role and that of anti-imperialist organizations within the imperialist states are directly linked as imperialism becomes encircled from without and destroyed from within.

### GI and Prison Organizing

The section of this paper on veterans oppression deals with the way in which we must take up the tasks before VVAW/WSO in organizing veterans into the anti-imperialist movement. In addition to those and the tasks addressed in the previous section, The Struggle Against Imperialism, VVAW/WSO as a mass anti-imperialist organization must develop its ongoing work in the areas of GI and prison organizing. There are many objective differences between the conditions that GI's and prisoners face. However, there also exist many similarities:

1. Both the military and prisons serve as receptacles for alienated working class youth.
2. Both the military and prisons involve disproportionate numbers of Third World people.
3. Both the military and prison system serve as direct instruments in the maintenance of the imperialist state.
4. The struggles within both include the struggle against the deprivation of constitutional rights.
5. Both GI's and prisoners experience isolation from the general population.

VVAW/WSO has had on-going practice in the GI movement over a long period of time. In dealing with the conditions of GI's in the military, we have developed an understanding which enabled us to take up the struggles of prisoners as well. Both areas of work are addressed in the position put forward by the NO.

The Buffalo Chapter has had no experience in GI organizing, therefore it would be presumptuous of us to attempt to put forward an extensive analysis of GI work on a proposal concerning it. However, we have disagreements with the NO position in terms of what our role as an organization should be within the GI movement. The NO says that "Besides providing an anti-imperialist analysis," our work in the GI movement "must be viewed from the point of view of conscious leadership-leadership that serves a vanguard role of always being out in front showing the best possible way to carry the struggle forward-leadership that is continually trying to initiate action to organize GI's to fight back". In addition, they say that "we should always be prepared to go to these struggles and do all possible to broaden and deepen them, constantly striving to inject as much political content into them as possible." Is the NO presuming that we have the experience in the GI movement, over all other forces in that movement, to take the role of the cadre organization for GI's? Is the NO saying that the struggles of GI's would not have political content if we did not "strive to inject it?" We see that to continue and develop our work in the GI movement is very important. We agree with the NO when they say that civilians must take an active role in that movement because

of the position that we are in. We recognize this because of our large veteran membership, VVAW/WSO has the ability to relate to the GI movement that many other mass anti-imperialist organizations lack. However, VVAW/WSO does not have the experience in the GI movement to take the vanguard role in that movement. This is pure arrogance! VVAW/WSO is a mass, not a cadre, organization. The statement of the NO that we must "inject" political content into GI struggles shows nothing but contempt for the consciousness of GI's in carrying out those struggles.

The Buffalo Chapter is just beginning to develop analysis and practice around prison struggles. Again, it would be presumptuous to put forward an extensive analysis in an area where our practice is limited.

We have been involved in prison struggles through our practice in and around the struggles of the Attica Brothers and Martin Sostre. This practice is now expanding into the prison struggles in general. As we gained a greater understanding of the meaning and importance of these struggles, we realized the necessity of developing an analysis of prisons and prison struggles and the so-called criminal justice system in general. We realize that prisons are used as a direct instrument of repression in the imperialist state. We realize they are used to physically attack those who rise up against imperialism and that along with the bourgeois ideology of "law and order" serve as essential bulwarks for the tottering imperialist system. The Third World communities, because of their super-exploitation and the subsequently higher level of resistance to imperialism, feel most sharply the brunt of this attack. The importance of prisons and prison struggles can be seen from the fact that many leading voices within the anti-imperialist movement, especially among Third World people, trace vital stages of their development to time spent facing the most brutal forms of oppression and exploitation within prisons. The importance of prison struggles is also clear because they directly attack a special repressive mechanism of the imperialist state, the bourgeois ideology of law and order and racism. We agree with the national office that VVAW/WSO cannot organize the prison struggle. As within the military, it is internal forces that must play the leading role. And also, as within the military, the diligent support of outside forces is vital. The NO reduces much of the analysis of our prison work to the question of whether or not it includes real members or chapters of VVAW/WSO. We should be involved in struggles where we provide material political support on the basis of whether or not they deal sharp blows to imperialism and on the potential they have in educating our membership and base and the broader segments of society it is possible for us to reach. Choosing our struggles on the basis of whether they build real membership is mechanical and opportunistic. VVAW/WSO will build itself and the anti-imperialist movement by taking up important struggles against imperialism—not the other way around.

We agree with the NO that we have built up a good reputation within the prison movement on the basis of our practice. However, it is subjective and self-serving analysis to put forward that practice as the D.C. Demonstration and VA take-overs since much of our prison work developed before those actions took place. We find that it is honest, principled and consistent practice around these struggles which is the most important element in building that



relationship of trust.

Given the importance of prison struggles, the broad level of practice around prisons and the courts within VVAW/WSO, the difficulty of building ties with the prison movement and the lack of concrete support for it, it is vitally important for VVAW/WSO to not only keep up, but expand where possible, the prison work we are doing. The NO states that our prison work will continue as long as "time, energy and money" hold out. We think that our prison work, based on an understanding of its political importance should continue until the imperialist system, which built and is maintained by those prisons, is smashed or until there is no longer significant material political aid we can lend to it.



## Democracy and VVAW-WSO

The August NSCM pointed out an area that was severely lacking in VVAW-WSO. That area is in the form of democratic representation. We found at the Buffalo NSCM that 3 chapters comprised over 1/3 of the delegation present at this meeting. All three of these chapters also represented regions of which region and chapter were one and the same, i.e. - (Northern Illinois-Iowa), of which the whole chapter's membership attended the NSCM.

Regions that had only 6 active members in the entire region were granted a 5 vote status that gave them the same amount of voting leverage on political struggles as such regions as California-Nevada, New York-Northern New Jersey. MOINKWVAF has many chapters and in fact more active members in one committee within chapters than the entire membership of some of the 5 vote regions.

This is of essence sham democracy. In fact, in no way, shape, or form can this method of voting adequately reflect the wishes of the membership of VVAW-WSO.

## Summary

This paper is a summation of the investigation the Buffalo chapter has conducted around the struggle in VVAW-WSO. In it we take political positions on many of the questions being raised within that struggle, but this paper is not meant to be the "line" of our chapter or a proposal for the resolution of that struggle.

We see that proposals for the future focus and programmatic work of VVAW-WSO should come out of political struggle and not be put forward at the beginning of those struggles in such a way as to set the terms and prematurely define the boundaries of it.

We see that the components of these proposals should be aimed at striking blows at the imperialist system. We do not seek to become the entire anti-imperialist movement, but understand that as a mass organization within we have a responsibility to aid in its growth along a broad front. We cannot concentrate our efforts on simply developing a narrow part of it or try to take a vanguard role within it. This is not the function of a mass organization. The primary tasks of a mass organization are to actively oppose imperialism through the education of its membership and base and providing material political support for struggles waged against imperialism.

In order to do this we we have to engage in programmatic work that relates to and flows from our development as an organization and our base and membership. For VVAW-WSO, as a specific mass organization, this would mean work around amnesty, the legitimate readjustment demands of veterans and material political aid and solidarity for third world struggles for liberation, particularly in Indochina.

We have an obligation to participate in concrete struggles being waged against racism and sexism which serve as ideological props for imperialism and exploitive property relations. This struggle, and our participation in it, cannot be limited to any single manifestation of them.

In addition, our participation in struggles where we cannot be the leading factor is necessary to insure the continuation of the social practice needed for our own development.

This paper has included criticisms of some of the positions being put forward and some areas of practice. We have striven to be principled and precise in these criticisms. Our goal is that the organization seriously consider them and evaluate these positions and this practice in light of them.

The purpose of this paper is to present what we have learned and help spark the struggle on a broader range, based upon more concrete investigations than have taken place so far. We hope that the NSCM, chapters and individuals of VVAW-WSO will take the time to seriously study what we have put forward, conduct their own investigations and criticize this paper. We welcome such criticism! We will try and constructively respond to criticisms put forward, striving to clarify our positions where they are unclear, develop them where they are incomplete and correct them where they are in error.

What follows is a summary of what we see as the key points of the National Office position, taken from the Political Statement of the National Collective on the Nature and Future of VVAW-WSO, the Clarification Paper of the National Collective Position Paper on the Future of VVAW-WSO, the Statement and Proposal on Building the Anti-Imperialist GI Movement, the prison newsletter Inside/Out #5, and the National Office Report to the 12th and the 13th NSCM. We tried to list the major aspects of their position on each of 9 questions or areas.

- 1) the concept of the United Front Against Imperialism
- 2) Mass vs. Cadre Organizations
- 3) What is a Focus?
- 4) What is a National Program?
- 5) What is the spontaneous veterans movement?
- 6) the GI movement
- 7) the continuation of "outside" work
- 8) Racism and Sexism
- 9) the WSO concept--non-vet participation

#### United Front Against Imperialism (UFAI)

- 1) there is a developing UFAI, outside any formal plan or declaration. It is unclear at this point what type of party will be leading this UFAI. The UFAI must be organized "at the enterprizes", or around the specific oppression that affects various segments of society under Imperialism. (NO Pos. Pap. & Clarification)
- 2) basis of understanding of UFAI - Dimitrov quote: "UFAI is a broad mobilization and unification of the masses from below, at the enterprizes, around the united organ for struggle created by the masses themselves." These "united organs" for struggle must spring up "at the enterprizes." (NO Pos. Pap. - underline ours to indicate difference between quotes)
- 3) example of UFAI: July 1-4 Demo in D.C. (NO Pos. Pap.)
- 4) political unity around the concept of UFAI is not necessary to unite with focus on vets and GI's. (Clarification)

#### Mass Vs. Cadre Organizations

- 1) there is a tendency in VVAW-WSO to limit its work and develop into a cadre type organization. VVAW-WSO must remain a mass organization capable of uniting as many people as possible against imperialism. Main value of a mass org. - capacity to involve a broad spectrum of society. (NO Report to 12th NSCM - April 1974)
- 2) "one incorrect analysis of VVAW-WSO can be called 'vanguardism'. That is, that we should be a cadre org. to lead the anti-imp. movement (NO Pos. Pap. - Aug. 1974)
- 3) VVAW-WSO must take responsibility for the conscious leadership of the spontaneous vet & GI movements. Leadership that serves a vanguard role - always being out in front showing the best way to move forward. (statement & prop. on GI movement - Oct. 1974)

#### What is a Focus?

- 1) Focus--center of activity around which we build the org. Focus will determine base (clarification Paper)
- 2) the need for a cohesive National focus has been recognized as we have evaluated our past practice. NO Pos. Pap. pp 10 - 13)
- 1) Gainesville Action - example of an unfocused org.

- 4) those chapters that had a specific focus - primarily amnesty with emphasis on vet & GI issues - grew and developed. Others did not.
- 5) when we worked with a specific focus, as part of a UFAI, we were able to pull off a militant national action - July 1-4 demo (NO Pos. Pap.)

#### What is a National Program?

- 1) (unclear if there is a difference between focus and program) "focus" and "program" often used interchangeably. (NO Pos. Pap. & Clarification)
- 2) need for a cohesive national program realized by this org. after anarchists dismembered the national structure in favor of regional autonomy. (Denver NSCM)
- 3) national projects can exist outside of national program
- 4) examples of things referred to in different papers as "national programs": four demands (current)  
calendar of dates for national actions (curr)  
the war in Indochina (past)  
Republican & Democratic National Conventions (past)

#### What is the spontaneous vets movement?

- 1) there is a rising spontaneous upsurge of vets who are a) an identifiable constituency and b) have a special oppression which can be linked to imperialism (NO Pos. Pap.)
- 2) the word constituency is abandoned and criticized, however the content of the concept stays the same (clarification)
- 3) we are not in the business of "ranking oppression" - what is primary is that vets and GI's are oppressed, not how oppressed they are relative to other constituencies. (clarification)
- 4) vets must be organized a) because of the role they play under imperialism and b) because of their special oppression.
- 5) "someone" is going to take up the leadership role in their spontaneous movement and it better be us so they're not left to careerists and opportunists. (NO Pos. Pap.)
- 6) we are not trying to organize every vet into the org. - just to lead them in their spontaneous movement. (NO Pos. Pap.)
- 7) the only way to organize vets into the anti-imperialist movement is to organize an anti-imp. vets movement. Must be linked to the anti-imp. GI movement. (clarification)
- 8) a monumental victory of VVAW-WSO was that AVM was exposed for what it is. They represent one of the (2) incorrect tendencies in VVAW-WSO. (NO Pos. Pap.)

#### The GI Movement

- 1) we must organize GI's because of the role of the military under imp. while we also recognize their special oppression within the military.
- 2) the GI movement is at a low level of activity due to lack of political and structural unity. (NO Pos. Pap.)
- 3) VVAW-WSO must take the lead in trying to build this structural unity which is the highest expression of political unity. (statement and proposal on GI's)
- 4) we cannot see the GI movement in isolation from other struggles. There must be an anti-imperialist context for our organizing of G.I.'s. Our work must be viewed from the

standpoint of conscious leadership. Cardinal principle - must be a fighting G.I. movement. (statement & proposal on G.I. Movement)

- 5) The only way to organize G.I.'s into the anti-imperialist movement is to organize an anti-imperialist G.I. movement (clarification)
- 6) must be linked to anti-imperialist vets movement (clarification paper)

The continuation of "outside work", aka "support work" aka "general demands"

- 1) Support work is work outside of the focus of the org. which does not take the responsibility of organizing people directly into the antiimperialist movement.
2. general demands can be raised that are in the interests of the anti-imperialist movement, however immediate demands must relate to our focus around vets & GIs.
3. outside work is done by chapters because local conditions, must dictate local practices; but local practice cannot dictate the national focus and the national focus must be applied to local conditions. (clarifications)
4. we should not & can not take responsibility for organizing people other than veterans & GIe directly into the anti-imperialist movement. (specifically prisoners.
5. we can continue our "outside work" with prisoners and around racism and sexism because there are vets in prisons and there are women and blacks in the military who are oppressed. (clarif)
6. no cut back seen in prison work at this time as long as our time energy and sesources hold out. (Inside / Out #5.)
7. Chapters in prisons cannot have the political and programmatic unity that the rest of the organ. has.

Racism and Sexism

1. We can organize against racism and sexism with thie focus because racism and sexism exist in the military and women and third world people are doubly oppressed as vets and GIs.
2. This focus will force us to deal with racism just as the struggle around women in the org. forced us to deal with sexism. (clarific)
3. the organization's support of the struggle of black people in Cairo, Ill. was an indication of the organization's consoiousness of the links between racism at home and the racist nature of the war in Indochina. (NO position paper) this was also a beginning sign of conscious anti-imperialist in the organization.

The WSO concept non-Veteran participation

1. WSO originally envisioned VVAW-WSO as THE mass anti-imperialist organization in the US (NO pos. paper)
2. NO supporte WSO as a means to legitimize the participation of women and non-vets. (clarification)
3. WSO took root as we became anti-imperialist and were searching for an anti-imperialist structure and program.
4. reasons why the org. moved toward WSO concept:
  - a. ability to draw in vets and non-vets alike
  - b. few natl. organizations still functioning after the anti-war movement faded.
  - c. we were held in esteem by international organizations and political parties.
  - d. there were non-vets, particularly women in leadership positions.

5.. The Gainesville action was the first to take place after intro. of the WSO concept and represented an unfocused organization.

6. anti-imperialists who see the importance of organizing vets and GIs and want to build the anti-imperialist movement will find VVAW/WSO the perfect organization to work in. We can also organize wives, lovers and husbands of vets and GIs into this movement.  
(clarification)

8. Women and non-vets may choose to leave VVAW/WSO to do work in others areas.

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR/WINTER SOLDIER ORGANIZATION

Address: 263 Connecticut Street  
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YEAR'S EVALUATION

BUFFALO CHAPTER

Political Education

A. Study Groups

1. 3 Marxist-Leninist study groups, with about 35 people participating
2. developed political analysis, moved work of organization forward.
3. first study group formed did not develop an elite, but made people aware of the need for study and political education, which resulted in the second and then the third group being formed.
4. each successive study group learned and built on lessons of ones before it.

B. Films

1. good educational tool, effective means of outreach
2. should have been better planned and coordinated to develop and complement our political work.
3. should have been co-sponsored with other groups, gotten more exposure.

C. Literature

1. we've built up a supply of anti-imperialist pamphlets, most written by people in revolutionary struggles in the U.S. and throughout the world.
2. only group in city which makes a large variety of literature available at reasonable prices.
3. lending library - books available to members and people in community; this library is pretty much utilized.

D. Forums

1. are developing techniques for successful political forums.
2. are holding political forums on a monthly basis.

E. Development of Self and Mutual Criticism

1. positive - essential to the further development of political education and to carry these lessons into our political struggles.
2. aware of the necessity that we need more practice.



We feel all of these means of Political Education fulfill the criteria set forth at the Yellow Springs NSCM. Additionally, they have concretely and positively affected our Mass Work. We started our analysis with Political Education because we feel that this has had the greatest effect on all other work that we've done.

## I. Mass Work

### A. Newspaper Sales

1. established a continuous and well-received presence at the unemployment office, in spite of NCLC's attempts to poison the atmosphere for political organizing.
  - a. it is important to maintain a presence. When there is a long period of time between W.S., it is harder to sell them.
2. we regularly insert leaflets into the W.S. (e.g. Attica News, Single Type Discharge, demo announcements).

### B. Leafletting

1. class analysis in leaflets is improving.
2. leaflet regularly and have established presence in shopping areas.
3. have leafletted door-to-door twice in the Connecticut Street (Storefront area) community.
  - a. we should do more leafletting and follow-up.

### C. Demonstrations and Rallies

1. VVAW-WSO has taken leadership in major demonstrations in Bflo
2. we criticize ourselves for participating in a demonstration without sufficient planning, but have learned from that.
3. picketing has been relatively successful, in spite of short lead time (e.g. Attica trials).
4. We've participated in the following demonstrations:
  - a. Jan. 27 - Implement the agreements, End Aid to Thieu and Lon Nol.
  - b. Feb. 26 - Attica, calendar calls
  - c. Mar. 29 - Viet Vets Day, Picket at Fed'l. Bldg.
  - d. Apr. 27 - Attica
  - e. May 10 - Ford's visit
  - f. May 11 - Chile demo
  - g. May 16 - Rocky demo
  - h. June 29 - VA hosp., building for July 1-4
  - i. May 18 - Armed Forces Day- West Point
  - j. July 1-4, Nat'l. Actions.
    1. Sept. 14, Attica Demo
  - k. Sept. 11 - Chile Demo.
    - m. Oct. 27 - Puerto Rican Solidarity Day

#### D. Postering

1. established practice of postering once a week
  - a. linked into our on-going work, both locally and nationally.
  - b. utilize old Winter Soldiers, leaflets, posters, demo announcements, etc.

#### E. Children's Films

1. means of outreach into the immediate community.
2. films should have more progressive and educational content.
3. membership has not worked collectively here.

#### F. Bourgeois Press & Media

1. not enough initiative in scheduling appearances on TV, radio, or communications with newspapers.

#### G. Films and Forums - discussed under Political Education.

the increasing effectiveness of our Mass Work has resulted in quantitative and qualitative changes in our chapter's Growth and Development.

### III. Growth and Development

#### A. Membership has grown

1. collectivity has improved
2. decline in specialization ( more people writing leaflets, doing lay-out, speaking, distribution of work, leadership, representation at meetings - combat elitism and niche making).
3. more conscious world view - not so isolated
4. individual responsibility and discipline have increased
  - a. people are more serious about their work and work has improved
5. beginning contacts with Third World struggles in this community have been made, but participation by Third World people has been lacking.
6. women taking leadership role, but number of women participating remains small.
7. Regional and National Meetings
  - a. many members have represented this chapter, resulting in increased understanding of organization at all levels.
8. Social Events - softball games and team, picnics, camp-outs.

B. Organizational Structure has improved our work.

1. Coordinating Committee (5 elected, rotating members)

- a. more clarification of responsibility
- b. improvement of functioning of Coord. Commit.
  - 1. communications (within org. and with other org.)
    - a. monthly newsletter to membership with improved content
    - b. with regional and national offices
    - c. with other organizations
    - d. chapter phone list
  - 2. collectivity
  - 3. planning and follow-through
- c. initiates activities
- d. plans and coordinates work for demonstrations, often in conjunction with specific internal committees, special committees, and outside organizations.

2. Planning Committee (Coord. Commit. and representatives from other committees).

- a. meets weekly to formulate policy and to plan and coordinate activities.
- b. still need to develop regular commitment by membership to attend and participate in Planning Comm. meetings.

3. Amnesty- Discharge Upgrading Project

- a. Qualitatively improved.
  - 1. mass work
  - 2. collectivity of action
  - 3. on-going work
  - 4. individual responsibility
  - 5. growth (14 members)
  - 6. speaking to audiences at schools, community meetings, forums.

4. Prisoners and Political Defense

- a. has done strong work around Attica, Martin Sostre, Gary Lawton (e.g., dinners, pickets, movie showings, trial support, etc.)
- b. lack of collectivity and unclear political focus resulted in decrease in mass work in summer
- c. in process of re-organizing and defining political focus.

5. Regional Support

- a. no longer functioning, although it had done some essential work, in preventing reg. coord. from becoming isolated. should be re-established.
- b. hosted NSCL, August, 1974, along with support from chapter.

6. Participation by members in struggles outside chapter activities  
(Work place, Day Care)

- a. enhanced by membership in chapter
- b. chapter has not consistently supported this work.

7. PVS-PMS Committee

- a. no longer functioning due to lack of clear political goals

8. Child Care

- a. not presently functioning
- b. attempts to organize child care failed
  - 1. leaders did not motivate people or present a clear program
  - 2. membership lacked understanding of need for child care.

9. Community Storefront

1. Established on-going presence in community

- a. self-reliant, no longer dependent on colleges or university
- b. not flash-in-the-pan community organization or fly-by-night campus group.

2. All work based out of Storefront.

- a. equipment located here.

10. Acquisitions

- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Gestetner   | 2. Magazine rack     |
| 3. more furniture                                    | 4. use of projector  |
| 5. Offset press                                      | 6. second storefront |
| 7. radio   | 8. paper stock       |
| 9. larger stock of pamphlets, office materials, etc. |                      |

IV. Relationships with Other Organizations

A. We've established good working relationships with the following group

- 1. Attica Brothers Legal Defense (ABLD)
- 2. Anti-monopoly Committee
- 3. Buffalo Worker
- 4. Committee for Chilean Democracy
- 5. National Lawyers' Guild
- 6. Puerto Rican & Chicano Committee
- 7. Revolutionary Student Brigade (RSB)
- 8. Revolutionary Union (RU)
- 9. Youth Against War and Fascism (YAWF)

B. Coalition work

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Farah                                | 2. United Farmworkers          |
| 3. Amnesty and Reconciliation Coalition |                                |
| 4. ABLD                                 | 5. Comm. for Chilean Democracy |

C. Due to lack of understanding of work done by organizations, subjective criticisms had been made by members. To correct this, we've started meeting with one group every other Saturday

1. establish liaisons with these groups
2. understand practice of organizations
3. joint sponsor activities, purchase paper, etc. in bulk.

D. No relationship with CP-YWLL

E. Antagonistic relations with:

1. Spartacist League,
2. National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC)
3. Buffalo Police Department
4. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

#### Fund-Raising

A. Pledge system

1. due to sporadic fund-raising, back bills, and the need for a permanent funding base, we asked members to pledge \$5 or more per month.
2. 20 people participate
3. range from \$5-\$20/mo.
4. enabled us to regularly support Regional and National offices, pay rent on two storefronts, and continue programs.
5. we are self-reliant.

B. Committees are expected to hold fund-raising events and use these to promote activities as well as earn money for the chapter. These fund-raising events are gaining political content and are increasingly successful. Some are:

- |                            |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Dinners                 | 2. Bake sales                   |
| 3. Benefits                | 4. Paper drives                 |
| 5. Garage sales            | 6. Book and record sale         |
| 7. Newspaper and lit sales | 8. Dues at meetings             |
| 9. Film showings           | 10. Contributions from mailings |

C. Raise money in support of:

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Melvin X. Smith | 2. Bob Hood          |
| 3. NOSCAM          | 4. Wounded Knee      |
| 5. Lawton-Gardner  | 6. Attica            |
| 7. Martin Sostre   | 8. Buffalo Worker    |
| 9. National Office | 10. Regional Office. |

Regional

1. Regional Office and Coordinator

- A. Written communications have been regular, particularly with respect to newsletters.
- B. Verbal communications are not as good as should be
  - 1. needs of regional coordinator are frequently not known by our chapter.
- C. Due to lack of support from a regional support committee responsible for this, the regional coordinator frequently is isolated and over-loaded with bureaucratic work.
- D. It seems the regional coordinator should travel to other and especially smaller chapters more frequently. Perhaps chapters close to each other could arrange a 2-4 day tour.
- E. Over-all, we feel the regional coordinator should be credited with keeping a vast area unified and in contact, a job we feel requires an extreme amount of time and skills, particularly in view of the diversity of this region.

11. Chapters

- A. Our communications with near-by chapters has been weak.
- B. Chapters have not consistently recognized the needs of the Regional Office. We have voted on a system of financial support, but have generally failed to implement it. This seriously hinders the amount of communications, phone calls, mailings, travel which the reg. coord. can do, due to lack of finances.
- C. Not all chapters in the region have been sending mailings and notices to us, but this is improving.
- D. From the contacts we have had (Mailings, Regional Meetings, Rallies and Demonstrations, etc.) it seems collective work is increasing and chapters are becoming stronger.

Seen within this light, it is clear that no adequate analysis of the actual base of our organization has been made. Even as applied to our membership, we see that the N.O. analysis is inaccurate. We see the largest definable part of our membership being people who were involved in the anti-war movement and developed anti-imperialist consciousness and politics. Within this segment of the membership, the largest definable group is veterans.

Understanding the dialectical relationship between base and focus, it is clear that to take up a focus on vets and G.I.'s at this time will: 1) be a step backwards from the antiimperialist focus which we have developed, 2) be a mechanical application of a focus resulting from an incorrect analysis of the base, and 3) cut us off from the social practice that has led to the development of our anti-imperialist politics.

"Where do correct ideas come from? Do they drop from the skies? No. Are they innate in the mind? No. They come from social practice and from it alone; they come from three kinds of social practice, the struggle for production, class struggle, and scientific experiment."

Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?

Mao Tse Tung, May 1963



AN INVESTIGATORY PAPER INTO THE CURRENT POLITICAL STRUGGLE  
TAKING PLACE WITHIN VVAW/WSO

BY THE BUFFALO CHAPTER

THE TRIALS FOR THE  
KILLING OF  
ALL THE  
PHILIPINES  
REVEALS

TELL NO LIES

CLAIM NO EASY VICTORIES

We must practice revolutionary democracy in every aspect of our party life. Every responsible member must have the courage of his responsibilities, exacting from others a proper respect for his work and properly respecting the work of others. Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories...

Amilcar Cabral  
1965 Party Directive.  
PAIGC  
African Party for the  
Independence of Guinea  
and the Cape Verde